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USING ADVISORY COUNCILS  
IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

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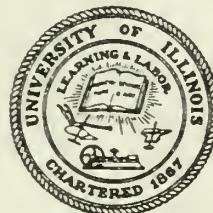
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# USING ADVISORY COUNCILS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

By  
HERBERT M. HAMLIN  
Professor of Agricultural Education



BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH  
BULLETIN No. 63

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## PREFACE

THE AUTHOR of this research bulletin has been working with advisory councils in agricultural education for a number of years, and for the past five years has made a rather intensive study of advisory councils in six Illinois communities. This bulletin is partly a report of this study and partly a review of the thought and experience of others who have worked with advisory councils. It is published by the Bureau of Educational Research in accord with its policy of giving through its publications helpful information and suggestions to teachers and school administrators. While this report is primarily concerned with advisory councils in agricultural education, it is believed that it has fruitful suggestions for the development of councils in other areas and in the public schools generally. It is hoped that it will be of interest to members of boards of education, school administrators and teachers, and the general public. The problem of securing more effective working relationships between the school and the public is one that is becoming increasingly important, and the development of advisory councils in agricultural education would appear to hold promising suggestions for the solution of this problem. It should be understood that this bulletin does not represent the work of the Bureau of Educational Research, and full credit for its preparation should be given to the author.

WALTER S. MONROE, *Director*  
Bureau of Educational Research



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THERE HAS BEEN increasing interest in recent years in the use of advisory councils of laymen in connection with the public schools as one means of democratizing educational procedures and of bringing school and community into a closer relationship. Such councils would probably be in wider use if the detailed procedures for their operation and the results of their work were better understood.

There has been extensive experience in the use of advisory councils in agricultural education which has never been summarized for the workers in that field. Councils for agricultural education have been in use for more than thirty years. Thousands of communities have had experience with them. The entire experience with these councils can not be adequately reviewed in this publication, but a large enough segment of it can be reported so that those who have had no experience with advisory councils may see their possibilities, and those who have used councils in only one or two communities may learn of opportunities they may have missed for making their councils more useful.

It is believed that the experience in agricultural education in the use of advisory councils may have important implications for other educational fields and for school systems generally. There is no assurance that the same results could be obtained in other areas or that the same procedures would be found workable, but there is a growing body of evidence that advisory councils may be rather widely useful in public education.

This publication summarizes in a very general way the experience and the literature relative to the use of advisory councils in agricultural education and in other areas of education. It reports a five-year study in six Illinois communities in which the use of advisory councils was an important feature; it reviews the advantages which have been secured from or claimed for advisory councils; and it points out the limitations which should be put on their use, the dangers and difficulties which may be encountered, and the practices which have been found to contribute most to their success.

Throughout the publication there has been an attempt to keep clear the relationship of advisory councils to the existing machinery of school administration. Councils can exist only as they are authorized

by communities through their boards of education and their school administrators. Their functions must harmonize with those of other school officials.

The publication is intended primarily for workers in agricultural education and for school administrators in schools teaching agriculture. It may also be of some interest to members of boards of education, members of advisory councils, teachers of other subjects, and the general public.

## CHAPTER II

### A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE IN THE USE OF ADVISORY COUNCILS

#### COUNCILS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

##### Early Developments

The advisory council is not new in agricultural education. In Massachusetts the use of advisory councils preceded the passage of the "Smith-Hughes Act"; since 1911-1912, or for thirty-five years, every Massachusetts department of vocational agriculture has been required by law to have an advisory committee.<sup>1</sup>

One of the early "advisory boards" in Illinois was described in 1923 by J. B. Adams, teacher of vocational agriculture at Harvard, where the board was in use.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Adams opened his statement with this paragraph:

The idea of having an advisory board for the guidance and assistance of the teacher of vocational agriculture is not new. As yet, however, most vocational departments do not have such boards. I think the organization of such a board has done and gives promise of doing more than anything else to insure the firm foundation and permanence of the agriculture work in the Harvard Community High School.

It would be hard, of course, to show the extent to which the advisory board contributed to the success and permanence of the department, but Mr. Adams remained for more than twenty years as the teacher of vocational agriculture at Harvard, and the department of vocational agriculture there is still operating successfully.

Except for certain changes in the general situation in agricultural education and in terminology, Mr. Adams' statement seems about as timely today as when it was written. Some of the points he made follow:

As long as vocational agriculture depends for its development upon the individual efforts of young and inexperienced men who change their locations frequently and are sometimes filled with fine enthusiasms that have no firm basis of practicality, so long the problem will remain unsolved, or temporarily solved only by the personality of the right man. Most teachers of vocational agriculture will admit that it is very discouraging to face the covert derision of the adult farmers of a community and that no great progress can be made until the farmers are willing to be neutral, at least. Yet all the work is done in the name of better farming and no one should be so interested as the farmer himself. To be sure, vocational agriculture is winning its way, even in the face of occasional opposition, but the great majority of farmers seem apathetic.

Being won, the support of the farmer is largely a personal matter. Given a new man, he will stand aside and wait to see what will happen. All the carefully built

<sup>1</sup> Information from Dr. R. W. Stimson, former State Supervisor of Vocational Agricultural Education in Massachusetts.

<sup>2</sup> Adams, J. B. "The Advisory Board," *Special Activities in Agricultural Education*. Springfield, Illinois: Illinois State Board for Vocational Education, Bulletin No. 29, June, 1923, pp. 82-85.

structure of personal loyalties crumbles and a year must be wasted, in one sense, before the organization is really going again. No farmer, unless he happens to be on the school board, feels any personal responsibility. Seldom is there any definite outline of extension work done or to be done and the new man must feel his way to see what the community needs. Especially if he is from a different community where a different type of agriculture prevails he finds himself at a loss to meet the real needs of the locality. He does not even know what to teach in his classroom, except in a general way.

How different is the situation when a group of the most progressive and respected farmers of the community are willing to give advice and moral support! They can say better than anyone else what events should regularly come in a yearly program of community service, what forms of personal service the individual farmer should expect from the agriculture department of the school, and what points of practice should be stressed in classroom work. Should we have a short course? Ask the advisory board and be sure that if these men say yes, the problems of support, publicity, attendance, etc., are largely solved already. Should the teacher personally cull farm flocks gratis? Let the board decide. If the farmer is personally concerned in helping, his interest increases tremendously, especially if he feels that he has influence in shaping the course of events. Moreover, if every decision of importance is brought before such a board, some mistaken enthusiasms may be checked before they bear the wrong kind of fruit. . . .

It is hard to imagine a better way to arrive at mutual understanding and confidence and to work together for common ends equally desired. Best of all, when the present teacher goes and a new man comes there will be a settled program to follow and the work already done will have an opportunity to endure.

Dr. Rufus W. Stimson, State Supervisor of Vocational Agricultural Education in Massachusetts, discussed advisory councils in his book, *Vocational Agricultural Education by Home Projects*, written in 1919. Referring to the need for cooperation with farmers, he said:

Of course, we feel that little can be accomplished through the cooperation of educators without the heartiest and closest possible cooperation between them and practical farmers. Wherever there is a department or a school, our law requires that an advisory committee of farmers shall be appointed to advise with and assist the administrative officers and the instructors in charge of this work.<sup>3</sup>

He gave the following specifications<sup>4</sup> for the make-up of advisory committees:

1. For county schools

The advisory committee of a school generally numbers at least fifteen, including one or two women, of the best practical farmers.

The plan of one school provides for a chairman and two other members from each town and city of the county.

Responsive to the spirit of the times, which is bringing farmers and business men together for the working out of problems of production and distribution

2. For high school departments

The advisory committee of a department is made up of the best practical farmers, varying from five to fifteen in number, from neighborhoods from which pupils are expected.

The committee must be composed of employers and employees. Each committee usually has at least one woman member, if there is a capable woman farmer in the vicinity; and often the secretary of the committee is a woman.

<sup>3</sup> Stimson, Rufus W. *Vocational Agricultural Education by Home Projects*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1919, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

of farm products, one school has appointed a supplementary advisory committee of business men to cooperate with the advisory committee of farmers in the management and supervision of the farm bureau department.

The director is expected to meet with the advisory committee; also other members of his staff, when invited to do so.

Advisory committee members serve without pay, but are reimbursed for their necessary travel expenses.

He listed the duties of advisory committees, whether of county schools or high school departments, as follows:

#### 1. Formal duties

##### a. Organization, officers, committees, minutes

An advisory committee usually organizes for business with a chairman and a secretary. In some cases, standing committees are appointed, such as committees on dairying, fruit growing, and the like. Record of the attendance at meetings and of the action taken is kept.

##### b. Acquaintance with policy and staff of school

A committee may meet once a month or once in two months. Members may be assigned to visit the school in turn, and to report their impressions of the policy of the school and the efficiency of the individual members of the staff at meetings of the full committee. A director or agricultural instructor may be invited to sit with the whole committee or with a standing committee. The members are busy people and generally without experience in teaching. Perhaps their best service is rendered when directors and instructors take the initiative in pointing out problems confronted and difficulties to be overcome. Committee members are urged to visit and pass judgment upon the home project or other agricultural work of the pupils.

##### c. No reports or recommendations are official until voted by a majority and transmitted in writing by the secretary to the trustees or school committee in charge.

#### 2. Informal duties

##### a. Friendly consultation with the instructors and controlling board

##### b. Making favorably known the work and aims of the school or department.<sup>5</sup>

In another section of the book a photograph is presented of three members of an advisory council with the local teacher and the state supervisor taken while they were on a tour of the pupils' homes. Included in the caption is this statement:

Home projects of 16 pupils visited in an afternoon, with full opportunity to stop at quiet spots on road and talk over what has just been seen or what is about to be seen. Instructors thus learn from farmers, and farmers from instructors.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. C. V. Williams of Kansas State College wrote as follows in 1923 regarding the use of "advisory committees":

The work of a vocational agriculture department in a community should be placed in the hands of an advisory committee of farmers, businessmen, and home-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

The superintendent of schools and the special agricultural instructor are expected to meet with the committee, unless requested not to do so on some particular occasion.

The advisory committee members serve without pay, and are generally under no expense for travel since they usually live near the department.

keepers of the community. We have never made it a rigid requirement in Kansas that a vocational agriculture teacher must create an advisory committee in organizing a department in a community, but have always urged it upon the teacher. It has never been tried out and discontinued at any point. It has always proved, where properly managed, to be a successful venture and it grows in importance as the work becomes older in the community. . . . No hard and fast lines can be drawn as to who should make up this committee other than that it should represent all the influences of the community. . . . Such a committee will afford both the vocational agriculture teacher and the superintendent of schools a place where any plans which may be made at any time in the development of the vocational agriculture work may be presented for consideration and which might come up later through suggestions which are made in its open meetings. When once the council has approved the program, it becomes theirs and they go out into the community and urge its acceptance and stand sponsor for any community work which the vocational teacher or his boys may enter into in carrying on the approved program. No negative results have ever been secured by any school in our state in the wise use of the advisory committee.<sup>7</sup>

The author of the present monograph commented similarly in 1923:

Through the advisory committee, representative of a whole community, a program is laid out which is the community's and not merely the instructor's. . . . In consolidated school districts, the boards of education consist mainly of farmers and can, if they will, serve the purpose. Even there, a special board is usually desirable since the school board members must devote all of the time they can spare to general school affairs. When departments are located in towns, with typical school boards of business and professional men, with superintendents unfamiliar with vocational work, and with agricultural teachers just out of college, it is almost hopeless to expect vocational agriculture to succeed.<sup>8</sup>

However, in spite of the early successful use of advisory groups and of their continued use for a generation in limited areas of the country, general advisory councils for agricultural education in a community have not been widely used. There has been very little discussion of them in professional meetings or in professional publications. New teachers have not been trained to use them. Detailed procedures for working with advisory groups have not, until recently, been worked out.

Why has a device which seemed so promising a quarter of a century ago not come into general use? Why has so little attention been given to the special procedures involved in using advisory councils? One can only guess at some of the reasons:

(1) Advisory councils for other departments of our schools have not been in general use, and school boards and school administrators have often thought they were not necessary for agricultural departments.

(2) Teachers of agriculture are often independent and self-reliant. Many of them may have believed that councils would restrict their

<sup>7</sup> Williams, C. V. "Relation of the Teacher of Vocational Agriculture to His Community," *Vocational Education Magazine*, 1:412-416, February, 1923. Dr. Williams was the agent of the Federal Board for Vocational Education in the West Central Region of the United States from July, 1918, to June, 1920.

<sup>8</sup> Hamlin, H. M. "Some Illustrations of Effective Use of Farms and Farmers in Teaching Agriculture," *Vocational Education Magazine*, 1:339-341, January, 1923.

independence or lead them in directions in which they did not wish to go. Some may have felt that the use of advisory councils would belittle their own abilities or indicate weaknesses in their own leadership.

(3) Our schools have been autocratic institutions. Administrators and teachers have been the "bosses." Other democratic procedures have fared no better than advisory councils during the past twenty-five years.

(4) During the same period, laymen have been taught to "keep in their places." Educational theory has often favored the management of schools by professionally trained teachers and administrators without lay interference.

(5) Many schools have remained aloof from their communities and have made no great effort to adjust their programs to community needs. These tendencies have been furthered by college and university entrance requirements and by increased state supervision of schools. Both the colleges and the state authorities have tended to emphasize general requirements rather than the requirements of particular communities.

(6) Since the education offered in the schools had little relationship to the lives and experiences of people outside the schools, laymen often agreed with school men that they had little to contribute in discussions of school policies. Education was accepted as a magic ritual performed in schoolhouses, the results of which would surely be beneficial though no one was quite sure how or why. A large part of the adult population, who had never undergone the ritual, accepted the imputation of their inferiority, sent their children to school, and remained aloof from school affairs.

In general, then, the "climate" has not been one in which we would expect advisory councils to thrive. They fared better in agricultural education than in many other forms of education because some of the adverse conditions enumerated were not present in that field. Agriculture was a practical, functional subject if it was of any use at all. Farmers felt competent to judge its results. Teachers soon found that the teaching of agriculture could not be standardized but that it had to be adapted to the localities served. When they began to teach adult farmers, they found that they must work democratically with them. In spite of these special conditions in their own field, teachers of agriculture worked under conditions not conducive to the use of advisory councils or other devices of democratic education.

It seems, however, that conditions are changing. We hear much talk and see some action leading toward more democratic school procedures. The essence of democracy in education, as the author sees it, is that those affected by policies shall have a share in making them, either directly or through their chosen representatives. The advisory

council, as used in agricultural education, is only one small step toward allowing those affected to share in policy making. It is a device of representative, rather than of pure, democracy, in that council members are chosen by boards of education who, in turn, are chosen by the adult members of a community. It does not provide for direct participation by adults generally, and it often excludes from participation the high school pupils who are commonly affected, more than any other group, by policies in agricultural education. However, using advisory councils is one way of making our schools more democratic, and it is often feasible to take this important step.

There have been recent attempts also to develop "community schools." In a sense, every American school is or could be a community school, since control of education is largely local. Often, however, this control has drifted in large measure to professional school people or to persons outside a community who have taken advantage of the indifference of local people to their rights and responsibilities. A true community school implies (1) a maximum of community control; (2) management of the school to serve the whole community without discrimination against anyone because of age, sex, color, economic condition, or any other reason; (3) participation in the making of school policies by all who are affected by them; (4) a program based on community needs, recognizing that a major community need is to become adapted to the state, the nation, and the world.

In schools of this type we can expect that advisory councils for agricultural education will be welcomed. There has been a growing appreciation too on the part of school administrators that the public relations program of a school does not merely consist of telling the people what a fine school they have and how much more money is required to keep it that way. "Two-way" public relations programs have become much more common, in which laymen tell the school people what they want and expect from the schools, and school men tell laymen what they are trying to do and what they need. More pleasant relations and more adequate school facilities seem to result from this two-way arrangement. Councils in agricultural education fit well into this pattern.

### Rise of Councils for Adult Classes in Agriculture

The modern movement toward the use of advisory councils in agricultural education traces directly to their use in connection with evening schools for farmers rather than to the early use of general councils for agricultural departments.

For a generation teachers of agriculture had tried sporadically to conduct evening classes. Sometimes these evening classes were very

successful. Often they could not be started at all or they died out after a brief period. In the early part of the decade 1930 to 1940, advisory councils came to be widely used in connection with evening schools because it was found that, by using them, farmers would take much more interest in evening schools, assist in recruiting members, help in planning courses, support the teacher in his work, and contribute to the evaluation of outcomes.<sup>9</sup>

A rapid rise in the evening school enrollments was concurrent in some states with the use of advisory councils, and, in the minds of many people, the work of the councils was a principal cause contributing to increased enrollments. Varied types of special councils for adult work have developed:

- (1) A council for each class of older adults.
- (2) A council for each class of young farmers.
- (3) A neighborhood council for conducting an adult class in one part of a community.
- (4) A council of farm veterans made up of members of a veterans' class or of representatives from several veterans' classes.
- (5) A county or community council of farmers to advise regarding the teaching of farm veterans.
- (6) A general council for adult education in agriculture in a community.
- (7) A general council for adult education of all kinds in a community.

### Other Types of Agricultural Education Councils

In addition to departmental councils and councils for adult work, teachers of agriculture have used advisory councils for the high school program of agricultural education and for chapters of the Future Farmers of America. Advisory councils of the parents of high school pupils have occasionally been employed.

### Current Use of Councils by Illinois Teachers of Vocational Agriculture

In September, 1946, Marshall J. Scott, teacher of vocational agriculture at Fisher, Illinois, sent inquiries regarding the use of councils to 300 Illinois teachers who had been teaching vocational agriculture in the state in 1946.<sup>10</sup> He received 149 replies. Sixty-six teachers reported success in the use of one or more councils; thirty-five teachers reported

<sup>9</sup> Dalbey, C. W. "The Advisory Council: Key to Success with Adult Classes," *Agricultural Education Magazine*, 13:68, 99, October, 1940.

<sup>10</sup> Unpublished study to be reported more fully by Mr. Scott.

partial success with one or more councils; two had tried to use councils and considered that they had failed. Forty-two reported that they had had no experience with councils. The sixty-six teachers reporting success in the use of councils had used successfully 116 councils, divided among various types as follows:

Evening school councils.....	41
Veterans' councils.....	30
F.F.A. councils .....	15
Departmental (general) councils.....	14
Councils for young-farmers' classes .....	6
Councils for all-day program.....	4
Other councils .....	6

These sixty-six teachers reported that they had used additionally, with only partial success, 24 other councils: 6 general councils, 6 veterans' councils, 5 evening school councils, 4 young-farmers' councils, 2 all-day school councils, and 1 F.F.A. council. One teacher reported using a general council without success.

In the summer of 1946, Lloyd J. Phipps, while surveying the status of supervised practice in vocational agriculture in Illinois, received information from 285 teachers of vocational agriculture regarding their use of advisory councils in connection with supervised practice. Of these teachers, 198 — almost 70 per cent of those reporting — said that they had no departmental advisory councils. Probably many of these teachers had councils for adult work but did not think of these councils as having responsibilities in connection with supervised practice for adults. The 87 teachers with departmental councils indicated their value for supervised practice as follows: very important, 42; above average importance, 29; average importance, 12; some importance, 4.

### Current Use of Agricultural Councils in Other States

Marshall J. Scott has recently completed an unpublished study of the use of agricultural councils in the nation. His report, based on information from state supervisors of agricultural education, indicated that councils are widely used and that there is increasing interest in them. The states of Massachusetts and North Carolina require a council for each department of agriculture. Indiana has long required that a council be set up before a department is approved, but indefinite continuation of the council is not required.

Two studies completed in the summer of 1947 have dealt with the use of advisory councils in Ohio<sup>11</sup> and Michigan.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Stuckey, Wilbur E. *An Investigation of the Use of Advisory Councils for Vocational Agriculture in Ohio*. Master's Thesis, Ohio State University, 1947.

<sup>12</sup> Schroeder, Walter. *A Case Study of the Development and Evaluation of a Program of Agricultural Improvement for Adults in the Olivet Community*. Master's Thesis, Michigan State College, 1947, 185 pp.

Recognizing the growing national interest in advisory councils for agricultural departments, the United States Office of Education released in March, 1947, an eight-page mimeograph summarizing the advantages to be gained from councils, the procedures used in establishing and conducting them, and the precautions to be observed in making them successful.<sup>13</sup>

### COUNCILS IN OTHER AREAS OF EDUCATION

Concurrent with the development of advisory councils in agricultural education, there has been considerable use of councils in other areas of vocational education, in other areas of adult education, and as advisers to boards of education. Community councils of various types have often taken an interest in the schools and have advised boards of education.

#### Vocational Education Councils

Advisory councils have probably been used more generally in trade and industrial education than in any other area. It is commonly expected by state and national officials that the schools will provide advisory councils for this type of education, which are made up of persons from labor, management, and the public. Procedures for their use have been well developed.<sup>14</sup> While the federal war-training program was in progress, each school participating in the industrial phases of the program was required to have an advisory council. Apprentice training councils have also been extensively used in trade and industrial education. Some use has also been made of councils in business education.<sup>15</sup>

An alternative to the advisory council for vocational education has long been employed in Wisconsin, where separate boards for vocational education have been set up in many cities which have vocational schools. These vocational education boards have separate budgets, buildings, equipment, and staffs, but their actions are subject to review by the city boards of education.

#### Adult Education Councils

Councils for city-wide programs of adult education have long been used, often for programs conducted entirely outside the city schools. The Chicago Council of Adult Education has been in operation for more than fifty years. Commonly these councils have consisted of out-

<sup>13</sup> *The Advisory Council for a Department of Vocational Agriculture*. Washington, D. C.: Agricultural Education Service, U. S. Office of Education, C.L. 2617, 1947, 8 pp.

<sup>14</sup> *Organization and Function of Representative Advisory Committees for Trade and Industrial Education*. Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State Board of Control for Vocational Education, 1940, 16 pp.

<sup>15</sup> Black, S. C., Jr. "Advisory Committees and Their Function in Building Business Education Programs," *National Business Education Quarterly*, 14:49-50, March, 1946.

standing leaders in a city who were concerned about education for other adults but were not themselves active participants in adult education activities. In this respect, adult education councils are in marked contrast with the councils for adult farmers' classes. One of the earliest lessons learned by teachers of farmers was that council members are useful as long as they participate actively in the classes for which they are providing counsel. The best council members were found to be those most representative of the class members they served. Classes for young farmers are not well served by councils of older farmers. Veterans' classes do not welcome councils of non-veterans. Small farmers of limited education want persons like themselves to represent them; they are little influenced by college graduates who operate large acreages.

The most complete statement about councils in adult education was published by the American Association for Adult Education in 1940.<sup>16</sup> A directory of adult education councils has also been published by that Association.<sup>17</sup>

The Iowa State Department of Public Instruction has recently issued a very helpful statement regarding the use of advisory councils based on extensive experience with councils of this type in the state.<sup>18</sup>

### Councils Advisory to Boards of Education

In recent years committees advisory to boards of education have been set up in certain communities. Campbell has reported the use of such councils at Fisher and Salem, Illinois.<sup>19</sup> Rogers has written of a council at River Forest, Illinois.<sup>20</sup> Godwin is another recent advocate of advisory councils for school systems.<sup>21</sup> Grieder has cited the use of such groups in English communities.<sup>22</sup> Quotations from recent articles by Leonard and Grieder, which follow, show the general trend of the discussions of advisory councils for school systems and boards of education.

President J. Paul Leonard of the San Francisco State College has recently written as follows:

Interested and competent citizens in the community must aid in the planning of the secondary school program. Too long we have devoted our major attention

<sup>16</sup> Kotinsky, Ruth. *Adult Education Councils*. New York: American Association for Adult Education, 1940, 172 pp.

<sup>17</sup> "Directory of Councils," *Adult Education Journal*, 4:21-23, January, 1945.

<sup>18</sup> *Adult Education Handbook for Iowa Schools*. Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa State Department of Public Instruction, 1947, 22 pp.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, C. M. "Illinois Communities Set Up Advisory Boards," *School Executive*, 65:52-53, May, 1946.

<sup>20</sup> Rogers, Virgil M. "Educational Advisory Council Helps," *American School Board Journal*, 111:34, July, 1945.

<sup>21</sup> Godwin, W. R. "Useful Technic in Democratic Procedure," *American School Board Journal*, 111:28-29, November, 1945.

<sup>22</sup> Grieder, Calvin. "Citizens' Advisory Committees — Have They a Rightful Place?" *Nation's Schools*, 28:29-30, September, 1941.

to educating our own profession and then "selling" the public. Education in and out of the school can be vastly improved through citizens' committees for planning the policies and general program areas of the school and for considering ways of coordinating all activities.<sup>23</sup>

Grieder has dealt with some of the common objections to the use of advisory councils. Here are some of his answers to questions frequently raised:

(1) Does the board of education serve the purpose an advisory council would serve?

No divine revelation is conferred upon school board members at their induction into office. While they may, in general, be regarded as a competent group, they should welcome, nevertheless, the counsel of especially interested and qualified persons who for one reason or another are not members of the board. There can never be a surfeit of good ideas.<sup>24</sup>

(2) Would boards be under obligation to accept advice? Would the profession of educational administration be debased to the status of an unpaid occupation for amateurs?

It must be distinctly understood that the advisory committee would have advisory powers only. Its members would have no vote in matters of board jurisdiction and would hold office at the will of the board, perhaps on an annual appointment or upon special call. The board of education would abdicate not one whit from its position of authority and responsibility. None of the advisory committee's recommendations would be binding upon the board of education.<sup>24</sup>

(3) Would the advisory committee members become meddlers? Would the wrong people be appointed who would sabotage the board's program for personal reasons?

It is quite possible that the evils mentioned may develop, but it is equally certain that they are not inherent in the plan.<sup>24</sup>

(4) Would not superintendents and boards of education pack the council with "yes men"?

Almost certainly an unhealthful reaction would be observed if school authorities sought, under the guise of promoting advisory service, to cultivate a favorable pressure group or lobby. The temptation to pack the advisory council would quite probably be present all of the time and extremely compelling some of the time. . . . There is no need to feel that advisers should represent only the interests that are favorable to the preservation of the school system in status quo.<sup>24</sup>

(5) Does the Parent-Teacher Association adequately represent laymen in school affairs?

The advisory committee proposed in this paper would have quasi-official standing. It would be more effective than the Parent-Teacher Association and hand-picked for a special purpose.<sup>24</sup>

## Community Councils

Various kinds of community councils, organized independently of boards of education, have studied the educational problems of their

<sup>23</sup> Leonard, J. Paul. "Characteristics of the Secondary School for a Nation at Peace," *School Executive*, 63:34-35, July, 1944.

<sup>24</sup> Grieder, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

communities, sometimes in close cooperation with boards of education. An excellent example of the successful operation of a community council in improving school conditions has recently been provided at Decatur, Illinois, where the council has worked in cooperation with the school administration and the board of education.

Often these councils are "coordinating councils" made up of representatives of many organizations in a community. Their primary function as such is to secure cooperation among these agencies in programs of community improvement. There are four major objections to councils of this type as substitutes for advisory councils which are a part of the official machinery of the school:

(1) They are independent of the board of education. The board may have no part in selecting them. They may operate as pressure groups rather than as advisory groups.

(2) They are usually not chosen primarily because of their interest in education or their qualifications to advise about the schools. They may not be the best persons who could be selected in a community for an educational advisory council. Because these councils often have many concerns, they may not have as much time for the schools as is needed.

(3) They are usually not representative of the entire community, but only of some of the more aggressive groups in the community.

(4) Since each member of this type of council is chosen by an organization and is responsible to that organization, he may be chiefly concerned with furthering that organization's program. Conflicts among organizational representatives are common, sometimes because the members of organizations have not heard matters discussed from all points of view and so instruct their representatives to act in a particular way at council meetings.

There is probably a place for community coordinating councils, but they should not be considered as substitutes for school advisory councils. In fact, it might be desirable in some cases for a board of education to set up an advisory council as a buffer against the unreasonable demands which some community councils may make.

Earl H. Hanson, Superintendent of Schools at Rock Island, Illinois, has warned against the dangers of this kind of council:

We occasionally hear proposals to set up in local communities organized discussion groups to advise with local boards of education. I fear there is danger in this proposal. If such an organization survives the trials of newness and really becomes established, it will exercise tremendous power, become a local pressure bloc. It would not be responsible to the voters in any way and, consequently, might become quite irresponsible and selfish.

Those interested in such groups recognize this danger and usually propose that membership be distributed to practically all the community's groups. However, there is a probability that many of the groups, largely composed of the less gifted population elements, will soon lose interest (they usually do in a community enterprise) and that a few dynamic leaders will take possession of the machine and run a petty dictatorship. Even if it does not become an ax-grinding organization, there is danger that the legally elected board of education will eventually rest too strongly upon it and abdicate its own responsibilities. When boards do so abdicate, the schools soon face trouble. . . .

There is a proper place for a community organization which will serve as a clearing house for community agencies, but it should not revolve only about one phase of life. It should, instead, be concerned with all, perhaps be in the center of all, but not definitely allied to any one. Education is a tremendously important community enterprise, but it isn't the only one.<sup>25</sup>

Mr. Hanson has accepted the suggestion of the writer, in an article following his, that the dangers of which he warns can largely be averted, while securing the benefits desired, by substituting officially appointed advisory councils for councils and discussion (or pressure) groups organized independently of school boards.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Hanson, Earl H. "Should Non-Elected Lay Advisory Groups Organize About the School Boards?" *American School Board Journal*, 109:23-24, October, 1944.

<sup>26</sup> Hamlin, Herbert M. "Safeguards in the Use of Advisory Councils," *American School Board Journal*, 110:31-32, May, 1945.

## CHAPTER III

### COUNCILS IN A FIVE-YEAR PROJECT IN PROGRAM-PLANNING AND EVALUATION

IN 1941 the Agricultural Education staff of the University of Illinois set up, in cooperation with six Illinois schools, a project in program-planning and evaluation in agricultural education. A central feature of this project was the recommended use of a general (departmental) council in each school. On the basis of prior experience with councils, the following recommendations were made in the original outline of the project:

- a. A general council is needed to advise with respect to the entire program of the agricultural department of the school.
- b. The council members may be nominated by the teacher of agriculture and the principal; they should be chosen by the board of education and should be responsible to the board. At least one board member should serve on the advisory council.
- c. Council members should be the most competent men available who can really represent all the people in the community who are concerned with agricultural education. They should include persons well distributed geographically, tenants and owners, members of various farmers' organizations, persons of various ages, and persons able to reflect the viewpoints of every community group. While it seems advisable to have the council made up mainly of farmers, it is often desirable to have at least one person from town. A farm woman might well be included.
- d. The principal and the teacher of agriculture should be expected to attend each council meeting. A meeting of the council with the board of education should be provided at least once annually. Meetings may be held occasionally with the part-time and evening school advisory councils and with the executive committee of the F.F.A. The farm adviser may be invited in occasionally. A supplementary advisory committee of town men may be consulted occasionally. Representatives of other groups and agencies may be met systematically.
- e. The council should be aware that its functions are advisory. Its relationships to the board of education and to the principal should be worked out clearly at the beginning.
- f. The council can be expected to concern itself mainly with studying community needs, stating the objectives of agricultural education for the community, and evaluating progress. It may pass in general on the ways and means proposed for attaining objectives or, if requested, may react to some detailed procedure if there is some question as to the community's reaction to it.
- g. If a council is to be effective for the purposes of this project, it should meet at least six times a year. Members should be chosen who see the possibilities of the project and who are willing to give considerable time to it. The teacher and principal can determine the probable attitudes of prospective council members before nominating them for membership in the council.

Provision was made in the beginning for terms of three years for council members. To set up a rotation of terms the original members were assigned by lot to terms of one, two, and three years. All but one of the councils started with nine members, so that usually three members were chosen for one year, three members for two years, and three members for three years.

## Developments by Communities

The activities of the six participating councils have varied considerably.

The Amboy council has continued as a nine-man organization but with an average of only about four meetings a year. In its first year the council arranged for evening classes in four parts of the community. Members of the general council served as chairmen of neighborhood evening school councils, and most of the work of the council has been done through these subsidiary groups.

The Bethany council has been relatively inactive since the first year.

The Fairfield council was changed from a seven-man to a nine-man council at the end of the first year and was otherwise reorganized. It sponsored a very extensive program of adult education during its second year. At the close of the second year Fairfield withdrew from the project.

At the end of the first year the Fisher council decided that all of the original members should be retained for another year and that three more men should be added, enlarging the council to twelve members. At the end of the second year a rotation of terms began, and four members have been retired annually since that time. The Fisher council has been very active continuously during the six years since it was started. Its regular meetings are held monthly throughout the year, and special meetings are sometimes added. The council has attracted a very high type of membership, and council members have developed in ability during their periods of service. The council has a record of unusual service to the Fisher school and community, and its work has become widely known.

Newton started with a nine-man council. In its first year the Newton council gave its primary attention to the provision of an evening school, which proved very successful. At the end of the first year regular council meetings were discontinued because of the war and gasoline rationing, but the instructor continued to seek advice from the individual council members. Much of the work the council had hitherto done was turned over to neighborhood evening school councils. In one year twenty of these councils were in operation. In the fall of 1946, a general council was restored on much the same basis as the first council.

The Noble council functioned effectively for a year, particularly in studying the community, setting the principal goals of agricultural education in the community, and conducting classes for adults. After losing three teachers, the department was temporarily abandoned. Work in the department was resumed in the fall of 1946.

This résumé of the histories of six councils suggests that much might have been learned from their successes and failures. The recommendations in a later section as to the make-up and management of councils are based to a considerable extent on the experience of these six groups.

### Council Personnel

The ages and years of schooling of the members of five of the original councils are shown in Table I.

TABLE I  
AGES AND YEARS OF SCHOOLING OF 43 MEMBERS OF  
FIVE COUNCILS SELECTED IN 1941

	Ages		Years of Schooling	
	Median	Range	Median	Range
Amboy . . . . .	45	34-59	10	8-16
Bethany . . . . .	44	20-57	12	4-12
Fairfield . . . . .	48	39-69	12	6-16
Fisher . . . . .	42	19-55	12	8-15
Newton . . . . .	38	17-55	10	8-12

Eighty-one per cent of these original council members whose affiliations were reported were members of the Farm Bureau. At least one school board member was included in each council. Two councils included the presidents of the local F.F.A. chapters. There was usually one town man on each council. Two councils included the chairmen of evening school councils, and one included the chairman of a part-time school council. Only one woman was chosen for council membership.

There was a general tendency to settle on councils of nine to twelve members. It was usually found that the first councils chosen were in some respects unrepresentative of the communities; deficiencies were corrected by adding members or by replacing members when their terms expired.

The possible inconsistency of asking school board members to serve on councils advisory to school boards was noted, and the recommendation was changed to provide for one or more board members to sit with each council but not as council members.

The Fisher council, the most active and successful of the group of councils, is now made up of members whose ages are 23, 30, 33, 34, 38, 38, 41, 47, 50, 50, 52, and 60. The median age of council members at Fisher is now approximately 39; in 1941 it was 42. Ten of the twelve members in 1946-1947 are farmers. One is a banker with farming interests and one is the manager of a cooperative elevator. One of the farmers is president of the board of education and another farmer is a board member. Two of the farmers are veterans; one of these holds

the degree of "American Farmer" in the Future Farmers of America; the other is a farm hand.

### Council Activities

In the first year the councils in the project in program-planning and evaluation engaged in such activities as the following:<sup>1</sup> (1) becoming familiar with their duties as council members; (2) determining the status of the school's current program of agricultural education; (3) studying the community agricultural situation and suggesting improvements which should be encouraged by the agricultural department; (4) initiating or extending adult education; (5) working out improved relationships between the school and other agencies concerned with agriculture and agricultural education; (6) adjusting the school program of agricultural education to the situation caused by the beginning of the war; (7) planning a program for the coming year; (8) considering means of evaluating progress toward the objectives they had chosen.

In later years the councils added such functions as the following: (1) planning the adaptation of the agricultural education program to returning veterans; (2) initiating consideration of community agricultural fairs; (3) reviewing the agricultural curriculum of the high school; (4) encouraging supervised practice for high school boys; (5) conferring with the officers of the F.F.A. and otherwise assisting the F.F.A. chapter; (6) working with soil conservation districts in joint educational programs; (7) studying the health, sanitary conditions, and causes of accidents among rural people; (8) encouraging the development of sow-testing and cow-testing.

### Some Council Accomplishments

Space does not permit a full report here of the accomplishments of the advisory councils in the project in program-planning and evaluation. A final report of this project will appear as a separate publication. Some examples of accomplishments in the two communities where councils functioned best — Fisher and Newton — follow.

**Fisher.** In the Fisher community the agricultural department of the school and the advisory council had an important part in developing educational programs related to sow-testing, cow-testing, and soil conservation.

When the council was first organized in 1941, it became concerned with the improvement of methods of pork production in the community. Grain-farming was principally practiced; not many hogs were kept;

<sup>1</sup> The minutes of the meetings of the council at Fisher, Illinois, during its first year are available from the Agricultural Education Office, University of Illinois.

and the results some farmers were securing with hogs were so discouraging that a number of them were going out of swine production. The council sponsored a community-wide survey of pork production in 1942 and found that the average production of pork per sow (180-day litter weights) was about 1,000 pounds. This indicated that about one-half of the farmers were producing pork unprofitably. The survey also indicated that good pork production practices were not in general use. There was especial neglect of swine sanitation practices which resulted in high mortality and much unthriftiness in the pigs. An evening school in pork production was conducted by a member of the council in the winter of 1942-1943. This led to the establishment of a swine improvement association. The council member who had taught the pork production course was the first tester for the association, and he has continued in charge of testing and records. Material gains in production of pork per sow have been recorded by the members of the association. Fisher is now rather widely known as a source of production-tested breeding stock. In February, 1947, a state association of sow-testing associations was formed in which the Fisher association has an important part, and the council member who has served the Fisher people as a teacher of pork production and as sow-tester and record-keeper was chosen president of the state organization.

Memberships and average litter weights in the Fisher Swine Improvement Association, together with data from individual herds included in the Association, are shown in the following tables, prepared from data furnished by Leslie E. Heiser, Secretary of the Association.

TABLE II  
MEMBERSHIP AND AVERAGE WEIGHTS OF LITTERS IN FISHER  
SWINE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, 1943-1946

Year	Membership	Average Weight of Litters at 56 Days of Age (lbs.)
1943.....	17	187
1944.....	20	171
1945.....	16	220
1946.....	25	205

Improvements in litter weights in one herd which has shown large gains are given in Table III.

TABLE III  
SOWS KEPT AND AVERAGE WEIGHTS OF THEIR LITTERS IN  
ONE HERD IN THE FISHER SWINE IMPROV-  
EMENT ASSOCIATION, 1943-1946

Year	Sows Kept	Average Weight of Litters at 56 Days of Age (lbs.)
1943.....	37	82
1944.....	37	183
1945.....	28	244
1946.....	46	185

Another herd which has been represented in the Association during the past three years has maintained litter weights which have been continuously high. In the three years, 1944, 1945, and 1946, the number of sows kept were 18, 12, and 16, while the average litter weights at 56 days were 276 lbs., 228 lbs., and 281 lbs.

Early in the life of the Fisher council the members turned their attention to the situation in dairying. There was little dairying except in one section of the community, but it was recognized that some people were finding it quite profitable. In the same winter in which the pork production course was taught (1942-1943) a course in dairying was conducted with another council member as the teacher. The members of the class became interested in starting organized herd-testing. Since there were not enough herds available for a full-scale dairy herd improvement association, and since herd-testers were extremely difficult to secure in wartime, the high school F.F.A. agreed to do the testing and record-keeping temporarily. Under this arrangement as many as 200 cows were on test at one time. Early in 1945, it became possible to employ a full-time herd-tester, and a dairy herd improvement association was formed in the community. The F.F.A. still continues cow-testing on a small scale for persons whose herds are too small to be included in the association.

There had been little interest in soil conservation in the community. The soil is perhaps as fertile as any to be found in the United States. There is little "rough land." Three-fourths of the land is tenant-operated and many of the landlords do not live in the community. One of the original council members showed especial interest in soil conservation from the beginning of council activities. In 1943-1944, he conducted an evening course in soil conservation. In 1945, a soil conservation district was formed. In the winter of 1945-1946, members of the district and the state soil conservation staffs cooperated in conducting another evening school on soils which helped to educate Fisher farmers in the use of the new conservation district. This school also served as a demonstration to the state of the possibilities of cooperation between soil conservation districts and departments of vocational agriculture. A member of the Fisher council is now chairman of the Champaign County Soil Conservation District.

Newton. It has been previously indicated that a departmental council has not functioned continuously at Newton. However, councils of some sort have been in action continuously there for the past six years. The original departmental council, established in 1941, set a pattern for the community program of agricultural education and initiated activities out of which most of the subsequent accomplish-

ments have developed. Neighborhood committees for war-training programs carried on in ten to twenty neighborhoods each year during the war. At the close of the war the general council was re-established.

Perhaps the most striking accomplishments at Newton have been the changes in the school district and in the agricultural department of the school. In 1941, the Newton school district included the town of Newton (population about 2,000) and two townships of rural territory. In 1946, there were 12 townships in the district. The growth in size of the school district is largely attributed to the contacts with farm people made by the agricultural department through its adult and high school classes. The agricultural department in 1941 enrolled 40 high school boys and no adults. The current high school enrollment in vocational agriculture is 165. Six teachers of vocational agriculture are now employed. (Three are full-time teachers and three are internes who devote about 60 per cent of their time to teaching.) It is expected, on the basis of previous experience, that more than 500 persons will be enrolled in 1947-48 in high school, veterans', young farmers', and evening classes.

Another significant development at Newton has been an evening class in dairying, now in its sixth year, which may be a prototype of adult education in agriculture as it should be conducted in the future. During the six years the herds of the class members have been on test, high school boys have been employed for the testing and record-keeping. The class has studied almost all phases of dairying, giving special attention to elimination of unprofitable cows, feeding, housing, and breeding. An artificial insemination association has developed from the activities of this group and other community efforts. The teacher has given a great deal of individual help to class members on their farms.

A council has also been used in developing an educational program for young farmers and young farm women which is one of the most successful programs of its type in the state. A general council of veterans assists in directing the program for about 200 young farmers enrolled in veterans' classes.

Agricultural education activities at Newton are centered about a few undertakings important to the community: improvement of milk, poultry, and pork production; soil conservation; and reforestation. Much attention has also been given to the human and social aspects of agriculture. The boys in the Newton F.F.A. chapter are provided many opportunities for personal and social development, and recreation and social communication are fostered among adult groups.

### Studies of Councils in Other Schools

In the later years of the project in program-planning and evaluation, and following the close of the project, the Agricultural Education staff of the University of Illinois has worked with many other schools, testing the procedures which evolved from the project and noting differences in conditions which might call for variations in practices. Staff members have met with many advisory councils in many parts of Illinois. Although there will be no report here of developments in communities outside the project, experiences in these communities are reflected in the recommendations which are to be made regarding the use of advisory councils.

Some of these other communities in which the author has worked with councils and with teachers in planning and carrying out council arrangements are the following: Brussels, Carbondale, Fairmount, Geneseo, Hamilton, Kenney, Mahomet, Marion, Philo, Potomac, Raymond, Reddick, Sadorus, and Vandalia. Councils have been discussed in classes and otherwise with a majority of the Illinois teachers of vocational agriculture.

## CHAPTER IV

### GENERAL COUNCILS FOR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENTS

GENERAL COUNCILS for agricultural departments have sometimes developed out of councils set up for limited and special purposes, such as conducting an adult class in a particular subject. This development is not normally to be expected, however. Council members sometimes resist taking on new functions. The persons chosen for a special council may not be the best persons to serve on a departmental council. There are important advantages in starting with a general council which will concern itself with the work of the whole agricultural department:

(1) A general council with diversified interests can envision the whole program and keep its parts in balance. It can add special councils or committees as special projects arise which they can fit into the general plan.

(2) In choosing a general council first, a board of education has available the best persons in the community. If other councils are started first, the general council may be constituted from the "left-overs."

(3) Experience in a general council is excellent training for those who are to serve on special committees. After a general council has served for a time, members of the council may be used as chairmen of committees for adult classes, the F.F.A., and other departmental groups. If this is done, the entire program of the department is kept integrated. If special committees are started first, they may never feel any kinship or obligation to a central council.

In starting a council organization, it may be desirable to have only one group designated as a "council." Other groups for special purposes could be known as "committees" of the council.

#### What Can Be Accomplished With a Departmental Council That Can Not Be Accomplished Without One?

It is sometimes stated that a departmental council is unnecessary because everything desirable which can be done with a council can be done, and is done, without one. Occasionally it is stated that more of these desirable things can be done better without a council because the teacher is then free to consult with anyone and everyone in the community and so gets advice and support from more sources and is not bound by the opinions and whims of a small group.

These points of view do not, however, seem to be tenable for several reasons:

(1) Having a council does not keep the teacher from getting advice and help from any other source. He will probably get advice from more diversified sources if he has a council, since council members bring to their meetings the ideas of many persons besides themselves.

(2) A teacher is much more likely to secure and use counsel if there is a systematic arrangement for providing it. No one likes too well to consult with others; we tend naturally to avoid adverse criticism. It is easy to avoid counsel or to take it only from one's best friends. The counsel one gets in these ways is likely to be unrepresentative of the ideas of the community, and it may mislead entirely the program of a department. Furthermore, many in a community may resent the teacher's associating only with his own friends and may object to having the department unduly influenced by a few persons who have no official status in connection with the school. A council, on the other hand, has official status and is set up to represent all community interests.

(3) Perhaps the greatest gain from using a council is that the advice received is *responsible* advice. It is easy for people to advise the teacher to do this or that if they have no obvious responsibility for what he does. The council, however, shares publicly with the teacher in responsibility for the work of the department because the community knows who the teacher's official advisers are. The advice council members give is, therefore, likely to be *considered* advice.

There are many other values in working with an organized and official group which will become apparent in the next few pages.

#### PURPOSES, VALUES, AND FUNCTIONS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

It appears that councils more often fail and are discarded because their possibilities for usefulness are not fully realized than for any other reason. Accordingly, it appears desirable to devote considerable space to indicating the purposes, values, and functions of councils.

#### Public Relations

Primarily a council is a method for helping a public school to serve the public. If its members are representative of the public and if they are given a real share in determining policies, the agricultural department of a school will be used to serve more people, to serve people more fairly, and to provide educational services more appropriate to

popular needs than is likely to be the case when there is no council. A council may also be considered a way of saying to the public continuously, "The department of vocational agriculture in this public school is yours to be used for your benefit and with your counsel." If a school does not really wish to take the public into its confidence and to become a truly public school, it should not set up a council, because laymen will soon discover that they are having no real influence in determining policies and will decline to participate in a farcical arrangement. An advisory council is perhaps the best public relations device of an agricultural department if it is honestly and properly set up for purposes other than public relations. A council designed merely to tell the public what the school is doing or proposes to do and to secure uncritical approval of these activities is a fraud and will be a failure.

### Determining Community Needs

An advisory council is useful in giving a teacher an estimate of the community agricultural situation which can be the basis of his work until more thorough studies can be made. Councils which become interested in special studies and surveys are helpful in determining the data to be gathered, in supporting the studies and securing cooperation in them, and in evaluating the returns from these studies.

Council members have usually lived long in a community and are interested in its future. They recognize weaknesses in farming and farm life and they wish to correct them. When they attempt an educational program, they like to know the community situation at the time the program is launched and the changes in the situation from time to time as the program progresses. Community surveys, which have been much praised and little used by agricultural educators, seem to many council members to be necessary and reasonable means for getting information for diagnosing the community situation, for use in teaching, and for the evaluation of educational outcomes. Council members are able to make good suggestions about forms to be used and questions to be asked so that the best community reaction will be secured. Their wholehearted sponsorship of a survey is about all that is necessary to insure its success.

### Stating Objectives and Evaluating Progress Toward Them

It is difficult at first for many laymen to think in terms of educational objectives and educational evaluation. It is not as difficult for them, however, as it is for many school men who have taught for years without much attention to either. Council members, in pursuing their

vocations, are accustomed to having tangible goals and they know when they have reached them. A farmer is usually very uncomfortable when he can not see that he is accomplishing something definite. If this attitude can be carried over to his activities as a council member, we can expect that he will demand of the agricultural department definite goals and definite proof of their attainment. The terminology of objectives and evaluation of the professional educator may have to be waived for a time, but it does not take long for the farmer and the educator to become able to speak the same language.

If the agricultural department of the school has been in operation for some time, the first step taken by the council may be to assist in evaluating the purposes and the program of the department and the results of the work already done. The chief weakness discovered by the councils in the six Illinois schools which set up councils in 1941 was that too few persons were being served by their agricultural departments; this conclusion led immediately in every case to the extension of class work for adults. A council alone can not evaluate very well the work of a department. It can share with professional people from within and without the community in arriving at an evaluation fairer than either laymen or professional workers could reach by working separately.

### Correlating the Work of the School With That of Other Agencies

Only a part of the agricultural education of a community is done by the school. In a typical community there are, in addition, extension work with adults, 4-H Club work, the program of a soil conservation district, a rural electrification program, and other efforts in agricultural education. There are also agricultural organizations and institutions whose activities should be correlated with those of the school. The school has a unique advantage in correlating these activities because the school belongs to all the people, all useful agencies have a right to expect that the school will work with them, and all groups may meet at the school. This advantage is greatly increased when there is an advisory council made up of persons associated with every agricultural and agricultural education enterprise of the community. Not only does such a council secure the coordination of the school with these enterprises, but it aids in getting cooperation among the groups sponsoring them. One council member has remarked, "No one can claim credit for anything done in this community because everyone is in on everything." In addition to discussions among the regular members of a council, provision is made for bringing into council meetings representatives of other agencies to discuss the correlation of their programs with that of the school.

There have been many attempts to correlate the work of agricultural education agencies at county, state, and national levels. Most of them have not been very successful. It is at the level of the community that correlation can and must take place. The same farmers may be working with several agricultural education agencies. They expect each of these agencies to make its appropriate contribution to the solution of their problems and to cooperate with other agencies in helping them to solve a particular problem if one agency alone can not give all the help needed. The school need not be the initiator of cooperative efforts among agricultural agencies; any group may take the initial steps. However, the school does not need to wait until it is asked to work with other groups. There are good reasons in many communities for the schools being in the center, rather than at the periphery, of cooperative undertakings in agricultural education.

### Guiding and Supporting the Teacher of Agriculture

The teacher of agriculture with a good council finds his work more successful and more satisfying. He develops personally and professionally through his work with a council. Without a council a teacher may feel that he is almost an isolated worker, lacking companionship and support in his work. If he is new in his community, he may be regarded as a stranger and a transient. He may lack interest in the community at the beginning and may not become interested in it as he continues his residence there.

In associating with a council, a teacher comes to think somewhat as do those who have spent their lives thus far in the community and who expect to live them out there. He engages with the council members in significant tasks, and he becomes inclined to remain in the community to await their outcomes and enjoy their rewards. He can share many of his difficult decisions with his council, so that these decisions are wiser, and he does not bear the full responsibility for making them. When a new enterprise is undertaken, its chances for success have been carefully appraised by those best able to judge, and the loyal support of a capable group of men is provided. The council is a clearing-house of community reactions. Through the council members, the teacher may hear commendations of some of his efforts and criticisms of others, and he may adjust his program accordingly.

All men, including teachers of agriculture, have "blind spots." Teachers' personal enthusiasms for particular enterprises and their personal aversions to other enterprises may lead them to develop programs which are unbalanced and unsuited to their communities. A

teacher who is enthusiastic about livestock may find himself in a grain-farming community, but as he associates with grain farmers on his council, he becomes interested in their work, sees their problems, and perhaps becomes more proficient in dealing with crops and soils than he previously was in dealing with livestock.

There is probably no method of aiding teachers in service which is superior to the advisory council. A council helps a young teacher to make a successful start. Its members are close to the teacher and in a position to make helpful suggestions to him. They assist in giving him an outlook on his job which is almost indispensable to his success. Their maturity makes up for his immaturity; their experience offsets his inexperience.

While a council may be most useful to a beginning teacher or a teacher new in a community, it may help rejuvenate teachers who have worked long in one situation, whose interest in teaching may be running low, and whose programs may be becoming traditional and stereotyped. A teacher who feels that he knows the needs and desires of the people of a community may be considerably misinformed as to what they are actually thinking. There is always a dangerous tendency for a teacher, and particularly one who has been successful, to become a dictator. A council provides one check upon this tendency. We can not expect the people of a community to continue their interest in the work of an agricultural department if they feel that all the decisions about the work of the department are being made by one man. Some of the decisions he makes are likely to be poor decisions because he is in a position to make them arbitrarily and with his own convenience too much in his mind.

### **Assisting the School Administrator and the Board of Education**

A council should not be considered to be advisory to the teacher alone. It is advisory also to the school administrator and to the board of education. Many school administrators have had little contact with agriculture and feel that they can help their teachers of agriculture less than they can help their other teachers. Some of them try only to employ good teachers and then they leave the management of the departments almost entirely to the teachers. Some teachers welcome this arrangement, but it is not one which is good for the teacher, the administrator, the school, or the school's patrons. A school administrator needs to know his agricultural constituency; through his contacts with council members he becomes acquainted with some of the farmers of his community and these contacts lead to other opportunities to work with farmers.

## Sponsoring Adult Classes

Most advisory councils have been interested in extending the services of the agricultural department to more people. An analysis commonly reveals that only from 5 to 15 per cent of the people of a community who might use a department are using it. The principal way to extend a department's services to more people is through teaching adults. Council members have usually been more willing to promote adult education than teachers, administrators, and boards of education have been. The support of council members in conducting an adult program often gives these officials the courage they need to go ahead.

Departmental councils sometimes assist in sponsoring particular adult classes, especially when they are introducing adult work into a community. Since departmental councils are representative of many interests, they are best adapted to working with adult classes which have a wide appeal. When specialized types of classes are set up, such as classes for dairymen, poultrymen, or part-time farmers, committees made up of persons from these groups should take over. To secure integration of efforts, members of the departmental council are often chairmen of these committees. The committees are of two types: (1) committees for neighborhood classes and (2) committees for classes held at the high school for groups from various neighborhoods.

In sponsoring adult classes councils and committees perform such functions as the following:

- (1) Assisting in the choice of the subject to be taught and in planning the individual class meetings.
- (2) Approving the teachers to be used.
- (3) Enrolling class members.
- (4) Deciding the time and place of holding class meetings.
- (5) Arranging social and recreational activities to supplement the class work.
- (6) Planning educational tours for the class.
- (7) Advising the teacher about local traditions, conventions, and attitudes which may affect his procedures.
- (8) Planning and carrying out measures for dealing with individuals who monopolize class discussion, take antagonistic attitudes, or otherwise interfere with the work of the class.
- (9) Raising and spending funds for class projects.

## Advising About the High School Program

Nearly all organizations of boys and girls recognize the value of adult support of these organizations. Boy and Girl Scouts, 4-H Clubs,

and others provide for adult sponsoring committees. Many of the benefits secured in the use of these committees can be obtained through the use of the departmental advisory committee in connection with the high school program in vocational agriculture. A few advisory councils have been primarily or exclusively concerned with the high school program. They have visited high school classes, toured the farms of high school boys to observe their projects, attended meetings of the F.F.A. chapters, and conferred with the executive committees of these chapters.

When a department council takes a broad view of its functions and is interested in boys as well as in adults, it is possible to set up standing committees of the council for high school class work, supervised practice, and the F.F.A. This is another means of putting council members to work and of utilizing their individual interests in various parts of the program.

#### **Helping to Adapt the School Program to Emergencies and to Gradual Changes in Community Situations**

In recent years there has been a series of emergencies which have required rather drastic changes in the schools' agricultural programs: depression, war, and turmoil following war. Schools which had agricultural councils were better able to get the community support necessary during the depression to keep their agricultural departments operating. When the war emergency programs were introduced, councils helped to get them into action. Councils assisted in introducing veterans' education following the war. One of the chief criticisms directed against the public schools is that they are slow to adjust to change. When an agricultural department has the guidance of a group of forward-looking, courageous men, it is stimulated to make the changes needed and helped in making them.

#### **Helping to Provide a Continuous Program When Teachers Change and Avoiding Frequent Changes of Teachers**

One of the greatest hazards to good agricultural education has been the loss of good teachers to other communities and to other fields of work. While the tenures of teachers of vocational agriculture have been longer than the tenures of high school teachers generally, they have not been long enough. It is generally considered that a teacher should not undertake work in a community unless he expects to remain for at least three years. However, the average tenure of teachers of vocational agriculture in one Illinois community during the first twenty years of the life of the agricultural department was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years, and in many other

communities changes have been too frequent for effective accomplishments. All too commonly the program of the former teacher is forgotten when a new teacher takes over. Thus, there is no continuous program of agricultural education in the community, but only a series of starts and stops. As each additional program is abandoned, the disillusionment of the community as to the possibility of accomplishing a program increases, and it becomes harder and harder to launch a new endeavor. Sometimes there are gaps among these isolated programs because departments are temporarily discontinued. A continuous council makes for the continuous employment of a teacher. A new teacher fits into a program which the council has previously approved and which has been in operation for some time.

A council and an ongoing program also help to retain good teachers. If there are nine or more men, respected in the community and chosen by the board as its advisers, who know the teacher's work intimately and want it continued, the community is more likely to try to hold the teacher than it would otherwise be. A good teacher, who has the support of a good council and who is in the midst of a worth-while program with promising end results, is more likely to want to remain in a community than one who does not have a council or a program. This generalization has support in several individual instances. A corollary is that good teachers are more easily attracted to such communities than they are to communities with no councils and no programs.

### Maintaining a Maximum of Local Autonomy

It is especially important that a program that is as largely supported from state and federal funds as vocational agriculture should set up safeguards against excessive state and federal control. No better device for this purpose than a strong council has yet been found. It would probably be agreed that in communities having effective councils the agricultural department of the school is closer to the people of the community and more responsive to the local public than the departments of the same schools which are almost entirely supported by local funds. A council whose eyes are fixed on the crucial problems of a community which must be solved by education if they are to be solved at all is not too much concerned about the sources of funds for solving these problems. If outside funds are available, they may well be used in the educational programs which the council has projected; if no outside funds are available and the project is needed, a council will not be reluctant to recommend that the board of education spend money on it.

In council meetings there can be discussion of new funds available from state and federal sources and of the best uses to be made of them

in the community. Usually some acceptable way of using them can be found, so that the community gets the benefit of all the assistance available to it. Uses unsuited to the community, which might be suggested from the outside, are avoided.

### Other Functions and Values

Some of the functions and values of a council become evident simply from "arm-chair" deliberation. Others are less obvious and are revealed as one works with councils.

Since the council is concerned with the total program of a department and is likely to be bored by its details, council sessions provide occasions when an overview of the program is afforded, when the woods are seen instead of the trees, and when guiding policies are worked out. These sessions are good for school men. They help, for instance, in seeing the high school, young farmer, and adult farmer programs in relation to each other rather than as completely separate phases. The relationships among class work, supervised practice, and the F.F.A. in the high school are considered. Council members are especially helpful in relating the work of the department to the total community situation. Since they are concerned with all that is involved in farming and farm life, rather than with technical agriculture in its narrow sense, they often lead a teacher of agriculture who has been narrowly trained in technical agriculture into teaching in areas he would not otherwise enter, such as the improvement of health conditions on farms, home improvement, road improvement, governmental policies as they affect farm people, and cooperation in agriculture.

Another indirect but important outcome of the use of advisory councils has been the unification of community agencies concerned with agriculture and agricultural education. Since a well-selected council includes persons familiar and sympathetic with all agricultural agencies and programs in a community, there are brought together, sometimes for the first time, the views of all groups concerned with agriculture. Often these views are found to be compatible, and community groups are led to work together in areas entirely outside those of concern to a council. The school seems to be an especially good center in which to bring together these diverging interests. Attitudes of good will, co-operation, and public spirit commonly prevail in council meetings.

Councils have been valuable too in developing new community leaders. Some of our best council members have been persons who have not previously been recognized as leaders, but who later became leaders in other activities because of their work on councils.

Council meetings have been useful in disseminating new agricultural information and developing new attitudes in the community. Some teachers think of their councils as their "best adult classes," though they are, of course, not counted as adult classes or accredited as such.

Council experience may assist in acquainting a group in a community with the need for community planning and in preparing them to participate in community planning once it is undertaken. Some of the functions which have to be undertaken by agricultural advisory councils are those which ought to be performed by a community-planning group. If there were agencies for community planning, most community study could be left to them. Plans for communities would be available and accepted, so that school advisory councils could spend their time planning educational programs in harmony with the community plans. There are unusual opportunities for community planning in many of our small and relatively homogeneous rural communities. Advisory councils may pave the way for a healthy, grassroots community-planning movement.

#### ORGANIZATION OF DEPARTMENTAL COUNCILS

Many councils seem to have failed because of their loose organization. Councils have sometimes been set up by the teacher of agriculture without consulting the school administrators or the boards of education. Often the council itself is not organized, but its members come together irregularly on the call of the teacher, and the teacher presides at the meetings and determines the agenda discussed.

Successful councils are usually definitely organized bodies. They have their own officers; the teacher and the school administrator sit with the council but are not members and do not, of course, hold council offices. There are regular and relatively frequent meetings. The council members, or an executive committee representing them, decide the nature of the meetings in cooperation with school authorities. Minutes of meetings are kept by the council's secretary and copies of the minutes are distributed among the council members. Special events (such as picnics for council members, teachers, and their families) are provided on the initiative of the council.

Our better councils have a definite status in the administrative organization of the school. They are created by boards of education and can be put out of existence by these boards. Their members are appointed or approved by the boards of education. The boards determine the field in which councils may be active and the conditions under which they work.

## Authorization of a Council

The first step in organizing a council is to have it authorized, first by the school administrator and then by the board of education. A teacher has no right to establish a council on his own initiative. Re-sentiment on the part of board members and administrators is likely to follow the discovery that the teacher is independently using a council. Many board members and administrators who have not had first-hand experience with councils are skeptical of their use, but in most cases they are willing to try to use councils if they are tactfully approached. No case has been reported to us of dissatisfaction on the part of board members and administrators after councils have been in existence for a time.

## Setting Up Council Policies

Certain policies with respect to a council must be determined by the teacher and the administrator with the approval of the board of education before a council is established. Council members should be told about these policies before they accept office, or at their first meeting. These policies should cover such points as the following: (1) relations of the council to the teacher, the administrator, and the board of education; (2) the number of council members, the manner of their selection, and the length of their terms; (3) joint meetings between the board and the council; (4) the limitations on the field of activity of the council; (5) the extent to which the council is to be advisory and the extent to which it is to be allowed to carry out or sponsor activities of its own choosing; (6) the way in which council activities are to be reported to the board of education; (7) representation of the board of education at council meetings. It is well to have these policies in writing for the protection of all concerned.

Other policies may be determined by the council itself, acting within the framework provided by the board of education. Some of the principal items which may be covered by self-made council rules are the following: (1) council officers and their duties, (2) standing committees of the council, (3) bases for dropping an individual from council membership, such as failure to attend meetings, (4) time and place of regular meetings, and (5) procedures in calling special meetings.

## Constitution and By-Laws

Some schools have thought it desirable to provide a formal constitution with by-laws. The following constitution and by-laws are adapted from a constitution and by-laws soon to be submitted for adoption

and use at Fisher, Illinois. The Fisher proposal is based upon six years of experience with a council. Only a few changes have been made in adapting the proposal for this publication. Some features, adapted to the Fisher situation, may not be desirable elsewhere, for example, the provision for a council of twelve members.

#### SECTION A. PURPOSES

Article 1. The Advisory Council shall exist only during such time as it may be authorized by the Principal and the Board of Education.

Article 2. The Advisory Council may direct its advice toward the Teacher of Agriculture, the Principal, or the Board of Education. It shall limit its activities to matters which directly concern the Department of Vocational Agriculture.

Article 3. It shall be the duty of the Advisory Council to:

- a. Study the needs of the community which may be related to the work of the Department of Vocational Agriculture.
- b. Suggest and advise regarding the objectives of the school's program of agricultural education.
- c. Aid and guide the Department of Vocational Agriculture in those activities which will lead to progress toward these objectives:
  - (1) Advise regarding the courses to be offered to high school, young farmer, and adult classes.
  - (2) Aid in enrolling class members when council assistance is needed.
  - (3) Aid in the selection of teachers when assistance is requested by the Board of Education and the Principal.
  - (4) Offer constructive criticism of the instruction offered and the instructional facilities available.
  - (5) Assist in evaluating the success of the courses offered, in the light of the objectives previously selected.
- d. Study the programs of agricultural education in other communities with the idea of encouraging the use in this community of those practices which may be applicable.
- e. Revise the objectives of agricultural education as study and experience warrant.
- f. Serve as an avenue of communication between the Department of Vocational Agriculture and the community.
- g. Estimate or measure annually the progress made toward accepted objectives.
- h. Provide special committees, or the nuclei of special committees, to work with various groups participating in the pro-

gram of agricultural education, such as adults, young farmers, high school pupils, F.F.A. members, and veterans.

## SECTION B. MEMBERSHIP

Article 1. There shall be twelve members of the Advisory Council.

Article 2. Members shall be selected in such a way that they represent a cross-section of the community served by the Department of Vocational Agriculture.

Article 3. Members shall be nominated by the Principal of the High School after consultation with the Teacher of Vocational Agriculture and the Advisory Council and shall be appointed by the Board of Education.

Article 4. Members shall be notified of their appointments by the Principal.

Article 5. Each appointment of an advisory council member shall be for three years.

Article 6. Four new members shall be appointed each year.

Article 7. The term of a new council member shall begin on September 1.

Article 8. A council member may not serve continuously for more than three years, except that he may be appointed for a full term after serving out the unexpired term of a member who has left the council.

Article 9. After a lapse of a year, a council member who has served a full term may be reappointed to membership in the Council.

Article 10. An individual will automatically lose membership in the Council if he fails to attend three successive meetings without presenting, in advance, to the Chairman of the Council or to the Teacher of Vocational Agriculture a valid excuse for his absence.

Article 11. Two members of the Board of Education shall be appointed by the Board of Education to represent it at council meetings and at least one member of the Board will be expected to be present at each council meeting.

Article 12. The Principal and the Teacher of Vocational Agriculture shall be encouraged to attend all council meetings but shall not be considered to be council members.

Article 13. Salaried professional workers in the fields of agriculture and education in the community are to be invited to attend council meetings when their cooperation is needed, but the Board

of Education will not appoint such persons to membership in the Council.

### SECTION C. MEETINGS

Article 1. Regular meetings of the Council will be held the second Thursday of each month at the Agricultural Room of the school unless other arrangements are made by the Council or its Executive Committee.

Article 2. Special meetings of the Council may be called by the Council or its Executive Committee.

Article 3. Written notices of council meetings shall be mailed to all members before each meeting. These notices will be prepared by the Teacher of Vocational Agriculture and mailed by the school Secretary.

Article 4. Meetings shall be not more than two hours long unless a majority of the council members vote to continue a particular meeting for more than two hours.

### SECTION D. OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES

Article 1. The officers shall be a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, and an Executive Committee.

Article 2. Officers shall be elected annually by majority vote of the council members at the September meeting.

Article 3. The Chairman shall be elected from among those members who have served on the Council for at least one year. His duties shall be:

- a. To preside at the meetings of the Council.
- b. To serve as Chairman of the Executive Committee.
- c. To appoint special committees, which may include persons other than council members.

Article 4. The Vice-Chairman shall perform the duties of the Chairman when he is unable to perform them.

Article 5. The Secretary shall:

- a. Keep records of the attendance of members at meetings.
- b. Keep a record of discussion and recommendations.
- c. Maintain a permanent record file of council activities.
- d. Distribute minutes of council meetings and copies of other council documents to council members, the Board of Education, the Principal, the Teacher of Vocational Agriculture, and others who may be concerned. He shall have the assistance of the school staff and the use of school facilities in performing this function.

Article 6. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Secretary. It shall:

- a. Act on urgent council matters between council meetings.
- b. Prepare agenda for council meetings if requested to do so by the Council.
- c. Call special meetings of the Council as they are needed.

### Number and Choice of Council Members

Many councils have been ineffective because they have been too small and too unrepresentative of their communities. Perhaps the first consideration in determining the number of council members is that the council should be truly representative of all elements in the community who are concerned in any way with agriculture. Some of the respects in which a council should be representative are the following:

- (1) There should be geographical representation from all sections of the community.
- (2) Representatives of various types of farming should be included.
- (3) Owners, tenants, and laborers should be represented.
- (4) There should be a wide range in the ages of council members.
- (5) There should be members of the various farmers' organizations and cooperatives and persons affiliated with none of these organizations if there is a substantial group of unorganized farmers in the community.
- (6) Different religious and political groups should be recognized somewhat in proportion to their membership in the community.
- (7) There should be members from town and country.
- (8) Women should be included.
- (9) There should be persons with sons in high school classes in vocational agriculture and persons with no children in these classes.

No council member should come into the council as a representative of any one of these groups. The members should be selected because they are high-minded, public-spirited persons, with secondary but deliberate consideration of the groups to which they belong. Election of council members by various groups in a community is a particularly unfortunate practice since the members thus chosen come to the council as spokesmen for the groups who chose them, sometimes as instructed spokesmen, and all of the feuds of the community center in the council meetings.

To get a truly representative council, even in a small community, it is usually necessary to have nine or more members. A council of more than twelve members has been found to be unwieldy. Hence, the usual range of membership is from nine to twelve. It may be advisable to start with a council of seven to nine and to add other members if it is discovered that the council is in some respects unrepresentative. Very often the first group chosen is not as representative as it should be, and because it is unrepresentative, it may sponsor an unbalanced program which neglects important community interests.

It seems best to have the membership of the council made up dominantly of farmers. Not more than two or three members from town are used, and they are persons acceptable to the majority group of farmers.

The school administrator and the teacher of agriculture should not, of course, be members of a council advising them. A school board member may well sit with a council, but he should not be a member of it. Paid professional workers in agriculture, such as farm advisers and soil conservation workers, should not be included, as such, but should be asked to confer with the council at times about relationships of their work with that of the school.

Persons inexperienced in the use of councils seem to err most often in the selection of council members who are too old or too nearly of one age. There has been a traditional idea that council members should be "key farmers." The interpretation has sometimes been that a "key farmer" is a middle-aged, prosperous farmer who has long been recognized as a leader and who has held offices in farmers' organizations. If this conception is maintained, the council members selected tend to vary from 45 to 60 years of age or older. Some of the members are likely to be conservative, worn-out, and disillusioned men who tend to look more to the past than to the future. They are certainly not representative of the community. If somewhat younger farm leaders, aged 35 to 50 are chosen, they are likely to be men busy with other interests who have little time and enthusiasm left for the work of the agricultural department. Some of the best council members have been men under 30 who have never held official positions of any sort. Older men are needed in a balanced council, but younger men should not be overlooked.

It is often desirable also to avoid men who are currently holding important offices in other community organizations. These offices may have a first claim on their time and there may be little time left for the advisory council. Furthermore, their first allegiance may be to another organization, and they may tend to think of the agricultural department

of the school in terms of the contribution it makes to their organization and to try to make the department subsidiary.

Men who would tend to dominate other members should be avoided as council members. If the domination of an individual is extreme, a "one-man council" results; the other members lose interest; and the dominating one tends even to dominate the teacher.

Sanderson and Alinsky have written with insight about the kinds of "leaders" we want as council members.<sup>1</sup> They and others have pointed out that the real leaders of a community are often not those who are aggressive in community affairs, active in organizations, or eager to promote themselves to offices. They are, rather, the people others have come, through the years, to have confidence in and who are consulted because they possess courage, integrity, an unselfish spirit, and a keen and balanced mind.

To be sure, the "poorest farmers" of a community would not be good council members, but a young man in a second- or third-rate farming situation who has made the most of his limited opportunities and is on his way to greater successes may be one of the best of council members.

There is still some confusion about the mechanics of choosing council members and notifying them that they have been chosen. At least five general approaches have been used:

(1) In organizing a new council, the teacher may ask the people of the community, as he meets them informally, for suggestions as to good council members. The consensus of the nominations of 100 or more people of varied interests has been found very reliable in making selections.

(2) Prospective council members have been approached by the teacher who "sounds them out" as to their attitudes toward the council. Those who do not react satisfactorily are not nominated.

(3) Council members are named by the board of education on nomination by the teacher and the school administrator and are then "drafted" for their duties. Since the "draft" is not compulsory, a small percentage of refusals to serve (perhaps 10 to 20 per cent) can be expected when this method is used.

(4) After a council is in operation, the members of the council assist in nominating new council members. Old members frequently know already the attitudes toward council service of the men suggested or they can learn them more easily and less conspicuously than a teacher could.

<sup>1</sup> Sanderson, Dwight. *Leadership for Rural Life*. New York: Association Press, 1940, 127 pp. Alinsky, Saul. *Reveille for Radicals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946, 228 pp.

(5) Some who like to emphasize democratic procedures arrange for the election of council members in some manner. This arrangement has been most feasible in choosing members of adult education councils. Members of an adult class that continues in operation year after year may easily elect their own council members and may like to do so if the board of education will agree to this procedure.

Various combinations of these methods may be used in different situations. The one principle to be kept clearly in mind is that the board of education and the school administrator must approve the methods to be used. If a board and an administrator want the advice of council members in choosing new members, or if they are willing to submit the choice of council members to a community election of some sort, that is their privilege. It can be reported, however, that nomination by the teacher and administrator and election by the board of education works very well if a large and representative group of people have been consulted in making up the list of nominees. If the choices are made carefully, the public seems to be as well satisfied as it is when it makes its own choices. The arrangement insures, moreover, that the council is kept closely integrated with the administration of the school. Perhaps this is a case where representative democracy is more satisfactory than pure democracy. The public always has an opportunity to influence its elected school board members if there is dissatisfaction with the council members the board provides.

Many councils have included one or two school board members. This does not seem to be the best arrangement. The council is supposed to be advisory to the board and a given person should probably not give advice in one group and accept or reject it in another group. A better arrangement is to have one or two board members chosen to sit with the council, mainly to audit the meetings and to make sure that the board has knowledge of everything that goes on in council meetings. A board member can not be expected to speak for the board in council meetings, and, since he might seem to be speaking for the board, he is quite likely to be hesitant to speak at all. The board member makes his greatest contribution to the council when he reports to the board and when he airs in board meetings convictions which may have grown out of his council experiences.

### Terms of Council Members

Some council members have been chosen for indefinite terms and they go on serving for years. It is more satisfactory to provide for definite terms, perhaps of three years, and to arrange for a definite

rotation of membership. Since it takes time for new council members to become familiar with their duties, it may be desirable at the outset to continue the same council for two years with only those changes which result from withdrawals or inactivity. Thereafter each member may be assigned by lot a term of one, two, or three years to get the three-year rotating system into action. Since there is danger that those concerned may feel obligated to continue certain persons on the council as long as they wish to serve, it is well to announce in advance that no member is eligible for reappointment until at least one year after the expiration of his term. A council with rotating terms brings in "new blood" and educates an increasing number of people with respect to the agricultural program of the school.

### Council Officers and Committees

The organization of a council should be kept simple and informal. A chairman and a secretary are the minimum complement of officers. A vice-chairman may be desirable. Council committees have been little used, but there is a greater place for them than has been found in the past. It has already been suggested that committees might be set up for adult work, high school class work, supervised practice, and F.F.A. A council committee might work with a veterans' council. Special committees may be needed for social occasions, for working out community surveys, or for other projects. The advantages in using committees are that more work is done and council members have a chance to work in the areas in which they have special interests and abilities.

### Council Meetings

Monthly meetings of a departmental council are desirable. It may be advisable to omit meetings during the busiest seasons on the farms. There should be a regular time set for the meetings, e.g., the first Tuesday in each month. Meetings are usually held in the agricultural room of the high school. A two-hour meeting seems to be about right. Meetings should begin and end promptly. Members may seem interested and willing to remain for long sessions, but in the long run they become discontented if meetings are long, and their attendance may fall off. It is reasonable to expect that the average attendance at council meetings will be 80 per cent or more of the council members.

There should be definite agenda for each meeting, usually centering about one topic. A live council usually has a number of topics awaiting discussion at its meetings. If possible a yearly schedule of meetings and topics should be arranged.

A council should have the privilege of holding meetings from which all others are excluded. Usually the teacher, the principal, and the representative of the board of education meet with the council.

One or two social meetings a year should be interspersed with the business meetings. One council has held its meetings on Sunday afternoons at a country club. Members and their families have enjoyed a "pot luck" dinner, followed by discussions of council problems. Members of the families have shared in the discussions.

Minutes of council meetings should be kept and circulated among the members. A secretary from the group may take the minutes, but the work of typing and distributing them may be done by the school. Permanent records of the council are best kept in the agriculture room at the school.

### Acquainting Council Members With Their Duties

In starting a new council to work or in beginning the work of a new year, a joint meeting of the council and the board of education is desirable. At such a meeting a common understanding of the work of the council and of its relationships to the board of education can be reached. Visits to nearby councils that are functioning well are very helpful in getting a new council under way. It is very hard for the ordinary, uninitiated person to comprehend the possibilities of a council or to visualize the work a council does; seeing is often required if there is to be believing.

### Subjects for the First Year's Council Meetings

There is much for a council to do in its first year. Some of the topics which might be taken up at council meetings follow:

(1) What is our agriculture department for? How good is it? How many people is it reaching? What territory should it serve? How many farmer operators are there in this territory? How many young farmers who are not farm operators? Who in the territory should be served? Should agriculture be taught to high school pupils other than farm boys?

(2) How is the agriculture department administered? Where does it get the funds for its support and on what terms? How much is it controlled from outside the community? What activities might it carry on for which no state and federal funds are available? What might be done with new state and federal funds which are to be available?

(3) What is the agricultural situation in the community? What are the principal needs of agriculture and farm people?

(4) What are the prospective agricultural opportunities in the community? How many new farm operators are needed annually? How many boys and young men should be in training to become farm operators? What agricultural opportunities are there outside of farming? What guidance should boys and young men have with respect to the community's agricultural opportunities? To what extent can the surplus population of the community find outlets in agricultural occupations outside the community?

(5) How competent are the members of the community as farmers? For this meeting the teacher may prepare a list of questions he would like to have answered, such as: (a) What are the average yields of the common crops? (b) To what extent are soil-saving practices in use? (c) What is the average production of pork per sow? Butterfat per cow? Eggs per hen? (d) What is the percentage of tenancy? How satisfactory are the leases in use?

When more exact data can be secured from other sources, the opinions of council members would, of course, not be sought.

(6) Joint meeting with the F.F.A. chapter to observe it in action.

(7) Joint meeting with the executive committee of the F.F.A. chapter.

(8) Meeting with the county farm adviser to work on joint programs.

(9) Meeting with representatives of the Soil Conservation District, the Rural Electrification Administration, or of the Farm Security Administration.

(10) Meeting with representatives of local farmers' organizations.

(11) Planning the evening school program for the year.

(12) Meeting with representatives of veterans' and young farmers' classes to plan the relationships of these classes to the general departmental program.

(13) Discussion of supervised practice for high school boys (this subject may be taken up more appropriately at one of the meetings on F.F.A. work).

(14) Meetings to plan particular programs, such as education in soil conservation and livestock improvement.

(15) In some communities, a meeting on buildings and facilities for the agriculture department.

(16) An annual meeting devoted to the evaluation of results of work already attempted.

(17) An annual social affair for council members and their families, possibly including members of the board of education and the teaching staff of the school and their families.

### Special Precautions in the First Year

Teachers of agriculture have found that it is desirable to begin the discussions of a new council with consideration of the community situation and community needs. Council members are "at home" in a discussion of this type and express themselves freely. This is the point at which the thinking of the teacher and the school administrator should also begin if an educational program suited to the community is to develop. Interest in council participation can be killed by spending time in the initial council meetings in considering school problems, such as providing buildings and equipment, maintaining discipline, planning courses, or insuring a better status for the teachers, unless these problems are clearly related to the community situation.

The teacher must make clear to the council at the outset that the members are to share in making plans and are not merely to approve completed plans which the teacher has worked out. Council members should be urged to take an active part in planning departmental activities. After a proposal has been discussed in a council meeting, the group may authorize the teacher to prepare and bring in a plan.

Council members have been found to be rather uniformly sympathetic and constructive in their criticisms; sometimes they have not been critical enough. It may help in the long run to have one or two of the teacher's proposals vetoed by the members early in the life of a council and to have their vetoes upheld, to convince them that they really have something to say about the management of the department. There may be a long-run advantage also in having some decision of the council vetoed by the board, the administrator, or the teacher as a further means of establishing the place of the council in the general scheme of things.

An effort should be made to find, soon after the council is organized, some definite project which council members unanimously agree is important and feasible and to carry out this project as rapidly as possible. If this is done, the council soon develops a sense of power, achievement, and pride in its accomplishments.

During the first year there may be difficulty in getting the council members to think in terms of education. They can see agricultural needs and some of the remedies for them, but they sometimes do not understand the educational approach to meeting them. They may not see very clearly what the school may do and what it may not properly do in meeting these needs. The greatest danger may be that they will recommend that the school engage in service activities rather than in educational activities in attempting to deal with community problems. It is important that they understand that the school's only function is education. They should realize that education has to do with human growth and change, which must precede the agricultural changes they desire; that people come first; that agricultural changes are desirable only as they benefit people; and that people on farms can not be subordinated to any system of farming, however modern and scientific the system may be.

There may be some initial trouble also because the council may wander out of the field of agriculture, and the members may have to be told, tactfully, that they are out of their field. One council, for example, spent an evening on bus transportation for all school children, which is a function of the board of education and the school administrator. Another has been dealing with the consolidation of elementary schools in the community. A council may lose its effectiveness in guiding the work of the agriculture department if it scatters its interest over too much territory; there is danger too that by "treading on others' toes" it may offend important people and the council may be discontinued.

## Publicizing Council Activities

Practice is not yet standardized and opinions differ as to the amount and kind of publicity which should be given a council and its activities. In general, councils have worked behind the scenes and have received little public credit for their work. Many council members prefer this arrangement. Too much publicity of the work of a council might offend the board of education or give the public the impression that the board has turned over one department of the school to another agency. Occasionally a modest council member feels that he does not really belong on the council since he does not feel that he is one of the best farmers in the community and that other farmers better than he might resent his being chosen. What is needed in such a case is to make clear to the council and the public that council members are intended to be representative of the community, not the "best" or the "key" farmers.

Perhaps a middle-of-the-road policy is best with respect to council publicity. The following can apparently be done without adverse results:

(1) Membership in the council should be announced to the public through the newspapers and otherwise. The public is entitled to know that there is a council and to know who its members are. If the council is to share in the management of the department and is to give responsible counsel, it should recognize that the public is holding it, in part, responsible for the work done.

(2) A photograph of the council with the names of the members attached may well be displayed in the agriculture room.

(3) Members of the council may be invited to departmental functions, such as parent-son banquets, and may be introduced to the guests.

(4) The council, along with the administrator and the board, may be given credit for originating certain projects when they are publicized in the community.

(5) An annual meeting open to the public for the discussion of departmental affairs may be held at which the council members share with the teacher and administrator in explaining the work of the department and in securing suggestions for improvement. Arrangements for such meetings have been very rare but the experience with them has been very satisfactory.

(6) Council committees may need to have their activities on certain projects publicized.

(7) The teacher may appear with one or more council members at certain meetings in the community in the interests of the department — for example, at meetings of service clubs and farmers' groups.

### Reactions of Members to Service on Councils

A study is needed of the reactions of persons who have served as council members. Samplings might be taken of attitudes during the first months of service, after two or three years of continuous service, and after all council connections have been severed. Lacking such a study, it is possible to report only random observations and discussions which reflect the attitudes of certain council members.

One council member has stated that serving on a council was the most valuable experience of his life, in that it has led him into new associations and new opportunities for leadership and service. Satisfaction in participating in active and useful councils has been shown by regular attendance at meetings, by service year after year, and by acceptance of reappointments after serving complete terms.

Council members seem to derive such personal benefits as the following: a sense of usefulness in an important community enterprise; an opportunity to become well acquainted with congenial persons who, like themselves, are interested in farming and are progressive in their outlook; a chance to keep abreast with their children who are enrolled in high school and part-time classes in vocational agriculture and to aid in securing better opportunities for their children in these classes; a means of keeping informed about all important community enterprises affecting agriculture and of becoming acquainted with the workers in the various agricultural agencies of the community; new ideas and practices useful in their own farming activities.

### Awards for Council Service

A board of education may show its appreciation of the service of council members by awarding them certificates at the close of a year or a term of service. There has been sufficient demand for a special certificate for advisory council members that one publishing house now prints such a certificate.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Danville, Illinois

## CHAPTER V

### SPECIAL COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES FOR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENTS

MENTION HAS BEEN MADE (see page 15) of several types of special councils or committees which may supplement the work of general, or departmental, councils, such as those for conducting a particular adult class at the high school; neighborhood councils for conducting adult classes in certain areas of a community; councils for veterans' classes, and for general adult programs in which the agricultural departments share; and F.F.A. councils. It has been urged that these be subsidiaries or committees of general councils.

#### Councils for Adult Classes

The departmental council may be the best one to sponsor certain adult classes meeting at the high school which are of general interest to the community. There may, however, be need for classes for special groups which should also meet at the high school. A departmental council of the type we have described would not be well suited to sponsor a class in dairying if there are only a few farmers concerned with dairying, but classes for special groups should be held if they are warranted. Council members should be chosen from among those who will regularly attend the class to be conducted. If the class is to continue for only one year, the council may be discontinued at the end of the year. Some special classes go on year after year with continuing councils and rotating council memberships.

#### Neighborhood Councils

Many communities are composed of several neighborhoods. As yet neighborhood councils have been used only to conduct adult classes, but uses may be found for them in connection with other phases of a department's program. Attendance at adult classes is materially increased when these classes are held at centers convenient to the proposed membership. It is sometimes difficult in beginning adult work to get the people from one neighborhood to associate in adult classes with the people from other neighborhoods. Since the membership in the neighborhood adult classes is likely to be small and the area served limited, neighborhood councils of five to seven persons are adequate. Councils including fewer than five members seem almost never to be adequate. Neighborhood councils may be continuing councils with provisions for three-year terms and with the terms staggered so that a part of the members retire each year. A member of the departmental

council may well serve as chairman or member of the council in his neighborhood.

### Councils for Veterans' Classes

Two types of councils have been used in connection with classes for farm veterans.

Generally over the United States, county councils have been set up consisting of representatives of the various agencies of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and of farmers' organizations. Other farmers and other non-farmers have often been included. In some cases, similar councils have been provided in communities, or departmental advisory councils already functioning have been used. These councils pass upon the eligibility of veterans for admission to the farm training program, sometimes dealing with every veteran who applies for training and sometimes with only the doubtful cases referred to them by school authorities. In determining eligibility, they consider a veteran's occupational objective, his fitness for the kind of training proposed, his farming program, the farming facilities available to him, and the qualifications of his farmer-trainer. Some of these councils review regularly the progress of veterans in their training programs and recommend discontinuance when progress is not being made. They are often active also in seeing that appropriate class and group training is given. Since representatives of agencies other than the school are included, these representatives may assist in providing training experiences which supplement those of the school and which can be provided by the agricultural extension service, the soil conservation district, and other agencies.

A second type of council for veterans' classes, which has been less used but which is regarded in some quarters as even more useful, is a council made up of veterans in training. Most of these councils have served a particular veterans' class and have included three to five members of the class. When more than one class of veterans is conducted in a county or community, a joint council consisting of representatives from the several classes is sometimes employed. These joint councils are useful in planning activities in which the classes may join. Farmer-trainers are sometimes asked to meet with, or to serve on, veterans' councils.

There is general recognition that the veterans should share increasingly in planning their own training programs. They may be inducted into participation by increasing their membership in county or community councils, or by providing veterans' councils, or in both of these ways.

### Councils for Young Farmers' Classes

Councils for young farmers' classes are organized about as other councils for adult classes. The members are, of course, chosen from those who attend these classes. A special situation arises when young men and young women have their separate classes in agriculture and home economics but join in certain educational and recreational activities. In these cases a general council for both classes may be provided which would be made up of the members of the two separate councils. Another arrangement is to provide a council for each class and to leave the joint activities to an organization set up by the students.

### Adult Education Councils

In certain communities there are general programs of adult education in which several school departments are involved.

Perhaps the best example of a general adult education council in a rural community is to be found at Sac City, Iowa. This council has been in successful operation since 1933. For adult education purposes the community is divided into four groups: farm men, farm women, town men, and town women. Each of these groups has a council of ten to plan special programs for its group and also to make suggestions as to classes and activities which might be of interest to the entire community. An executive committee for the total program of adult education consists of the chairman of each of these groups, the superintendent of schools, the principal of the high school, and the teacher of agriculture (who is the director of adult education in the school system). This grouping of laymen and professional men in the executive committee is confusing and probably undesirable. It would seem better to have an advisory committee of participants in the adult program with whom the school men would confer.

It is certainly desirable that, when several departments of a school have adult education programs, there be some attempt to coordinate their activities. It is highly desirable, too, that these general programs of adult education develop in our schools. Vocational agriculture often leads the way in adult education in rural communities, but its program should not be the only one and it should not be segregated from other adult programs.

### F. F. A. Councils

Boys in F.F.A. chapters need the guidance and inspiration of adults. Other successful organizations for boys and girls commonly have adult committees. The Scouts employ troop committees; 4-H Clubs have county club committees; and the Y-Boys organization uses ad-

visory committees. Since the F.F.A. is fast becoming an integral part of vocational agriculture in the high school, an advisory council for the F.F.A. could be advisory with respect to the entire high school program. It could be especially helpful in promoting supervised practice in vocational agriculture, which is an important interest of the F.F.A. One way of getting an F.F.A. advisory group established is to appoint a committee of the departmental council to serve. This committee should be chosen in consultation with the executive committee of the F.F.A. and should be fully acceptable to the F.F.A. members.

Some F.F.A. councils have been constituted out of the "honorary farmers" of a chapter. These honorary farmers are elected by the boys on the basis of their service to the chapter. There has been some feeling that their services tend to decline after they have received this recognition and that something should be done to make them even more useful to a chapter after their election. Perhaps the best example of this type of council is to be found at Norman, Oklahoma, reported on the basis of a visit by the author there in October, 1946. This report has been approved by E. F. Foreman, chapter adviser.

The Norman F.F.A. council was founded in 1940. At that time there were 28 honorary farmers eligible for membership. At present the council has 50 members. Six meetings of the council were held from September, 1945, through October, 1946:

*September, 1945*—Discussion of the national chapter contest, of entering the local chapter in it, and ways in which the council members might help the chapter in earning a "gold emblem" award in the contest.

*October, 1945*—Proposed chapter program presented by boys. Advice of council secured. Discussion of ways in which council might help execute the program.

*January, 1946*—Progress report by chapter and adviser.

*March, 1946*—Another progress report. Observation by council members of new hotbeds and cold frames and new livestock-spraying equipment.

*September, 1946*—Discussion of county fair and its needs.

*October, 1946*—Discussion of arrangements for trip to National F.F.A. Convention at Kansas City, Missouri, where the chapter received the "gold emblem" award.

With the help of the council, \$1,032 was raised to pay the expenses of every chapter member for the Kansas City trip. Twenty-eight of the council members accompanied the boys on the trip. The chapter raised a budget of \$2,214.03 for its year's work in addition to the funds used for the Kansas City trip.

In addition to his F.F.A. council, Mr. Foreman has an advisory council of eleven for his adult classes.

Each member of the Norman board of education is, *ex officio*, an honorary farmer, so that there is close coordination between the board and the F.F.A. council.

One F.F.A. adviser has reported an F.F.A. council composed of the members of a local service club. While many of the advantages of a council could be gained from such arrangement, it appears to be a very questionable one, since the members of the service club would be chosen for reasons other than their interest in, or value to, the chapter and since their selection and their activities would be largely outside the influence of the school administration. Furthermore, one would expect jealousy on the part of other community organizations because a school organization had been turned over to a private group for sponsorship.

Some of the activities in which an F.F.A. council might engage are the following:

- (1) Helping a chapter to plan a program of work and to secure community support in carrying it out.
- (2) Helping the chapter in the community by arranging for the chapter to participate in community events along with other organizations, by interesting other people in the chapter, and by working out better relationships with other groups.
- (3) Accompanying groups on trips to fairs, to state and national meetings, and on camping trips and other tours.
- (4) Assisting in the provision of transportation for F.F.A. boys.
- (5) Becoming familiar with the supervised practice of the boys and giving them encouragement in it.
- (6) Assisting with F.F.A. recreation.
- (7) Consulting with F.F.A. committees and helping to train chapter officers.

### May Too Many Councils and Committees Be Organized?

It is obvious that the organization of councils within a community may become very complex, may involve a great many persons, and may require a large amount of time on the part of the teacher of agriculture. The best answer to this objection seems to be that there is very little danger of interesting too many people in the work of the agricultural department. Since councils are representative, only a small fraction of the people of a community potentially affected by the department would ever be included as council members.

A word of warning on this point may, however, be necessary. Complex and comprehensive machinery should not be set up at first. Starting with a general council, one may develop additional committees as needed. After a general council has learned to do its work well,

its members may be used in new committees so that the teacher will not have to attend every meeting of every committee or even have a large amount of responsibility for the work of every committee. It may take ten years of slow and careful development to provide all of the functioning committees a large community would need. It is perhaps needless to say that no committees should be formed unless they are vitally needed and unless there are arrangements for guiding their work very carefully during the first few years of their existence.

## CHAPTER VI

### OBSTACLES AND LIMITATIONS IN THE USE OF COUNCILS

No ONE should gain the impression from this publication that only happiness and success await the teacher of agriculture who uses advisory councils. It is true that serious difficulties have been rare. If there has been failure in the use of a council, the principal results have been that the council has been dropped and its value to the program has been sacrificed. In any enterprise involving human beings, there will be trials and tribulations arising out of suspicions, jealousies, prejudices, and fears. Councils are no exception. Ability in working with people, essential in a teacher, is the principal attribute the teacher needs in working with advisory councils. It may be well to set down some of the specific obstacles and limitations which have been encountered, so that those considering the use of councils may be forewarned and prepared.

#### **The Teacher**

The teacher of agriculture is the principal factor leading to council success or failure. Some teachers seem to be entirely unsuited for work with councils and probably should not attempt to use them. A teacher who works effectively with councils is one who has a preference for remaining in the background, who is not too talkative, who has a genuine liking for democratic procedures, who wants help from others, and who recognizes that the school belongs to the public and not to him personally. He can not be too independent and he must not be domineering. Some teachers seem to avoid the use of councils because they are afraid that councils will pile more work on the department. Their fears are justified; however, councils may also assist in getting a more satisfactory schedule for the teacher or in providing helpers for him. Councils tend to grow quite fond of their teachers and to treat them with much consideration.

Teachers must be trained to use councils just as they are trained for anything else. Training of teachers in this respect seems largely to have been neglected. Training teachers for the successful use of councils involves:

(1) Developing with them a comprehensive and systematic philosophy of agricultural education which emphasizes school-community relationships and democratic procedures.

(2) Setting aside adequate time in courses in agricultural education to develop with prospective teachers concepts and practices such as those treated in this publication.

(3) Providing first-hand contacts with councils through class and group observation of councils at work and, especially, through opportunities to work with councils in the centers in which practice teaching is conducted.

(4) Assisting beginning teachers in setting up their first councils. (A tactful teacher-trainer may be of much help in sitting in the second or third meeting of a newly established council and in occasional subsequent meetings. The experience may be worth even more to the teacher-trainer than to the teacher since it gives him contacts with representative farmers which he may not otherwise secure.)

### **The School Administrator**

Some school administrators have come to believe that they should administer their schools from the top down as an industry or business is usually administered. They have little use for laymen in school management; even a lay board of education is to them a necessary evil. Some administrators have had unfortunate experiences with parent-teachers' organizations and with laymen's pressure groups of various sorts. Advisory councils are not used in other departments of the school, and it may seem inadvisable to provide an exception for the agricultural department. Some administrators have not supported their councils as they might and have not gained from them the personal benefit inherent in them because they have not found time to attend council meetings. There is great advantage to the departmental council if the school administrator can meet rather regularly with it, and the administrator may occasionally be able to sit with some of the special committees. The interest of administrators in attending council and committee meetings will be increased if they are given responsibilities in connection with these meetings, such as conferring with certain groups, reporting on particular projects, or talking with council members regarding general school conditions which affect the work in agriculture.

### **The Board of Education**

Boards of education are occasionally found reluctant to approve an arrangement for a council. The idea is usually new to them. They wonder whether there may be conflict between the council and the board. When the relationships between the council and the board are

set up as proposed in this publication, their objections are usually withdrawn. Often they welcome the opportunity of getting the advice of representative farmers in guiding the agricultural department since the board's principal purpose may be to provide an educational service acceptable to the farmers.

### **The Council Members**

A few councils have been eliminated because the initial selection of council members was unfortunate. The best safeguard against the selection of misfits is to consult as many people as possible about prospective members and to avoid persons about whom some of the people of the community have doubts. When inactive council members have been chosen, they should be eliminated at the earliest opportunity. The council itself can pass rules to eliminate inactive members. Such rules should be enacted early so that no personalities are involved. It may be desirable at first to set a term of one year only for council members, so that the council can be reorganized at the end of the first year and its further deterioration can be prevented.

### **Finding Sufficient Profitable Work to Do**

If councils languish because they can not find appropriate work to do, it is usually the fault of an unimaginative teacher of agriculture who does not see the full possibilities of his work. If the teacher lacks imagination, he can rely on the more imaginative members of the council who frequently advance very good ideas.

### **Hesitancy in Calling Busy Men Together for Meetings**

Sometimes the teacher of agriculture depreciates the importance of his own work and overemphasizes the importance of the work his council members are doing outside council meetings. Feeling as he does, he hesitates to suggest enough council meetings to make the council a vital group. Certainly the direction of an effective and comprehensive program of agricultural education in an agricultural community is one of the most important activities in which anyone in the community can engage. Many laymen see a claim by the school on their services as a first claim. Men of this type can be selected and, when selected, they should be called upon frequently.

### **Council Complacency**

Especially in recent years, when farm prices have been good, many farmers have become very complacent about things as they are. Never having been in contact with another agricultural department and having

perhaps been told that theirs is the best in the state, they question whether it needs to be changed in any way. Such an attitude is fatal to council effectiveness. Good council work begins with a teacher of agriculture who is dissatisfied with things as they are. Opportunities should be provided for council members to see what other schools are doing. Persons can be brought in from the outside to awaken and stimulate the council members. An occasional systematic evaluation of the department in which council members, the teacher, and the school administrator share with outsiders is a helpful way to counteract complacency.

Much can be done to interest council members in their work and to make them see the needs of the community and the possible contributions of the agricultural department if the teacher of agriculture will spend considerable time in individual conferences with council members on their farms and elsewhere.

### **Community Rivalries**

Sometimes it seems rather hopeless to organize a council, because the community is split into rival camps. There may be cases where the organization of a council representative of all groups is impossible. We have had some fortunate experiences, however, in organizing such councils in split communities. It is usually possible to pick nine persons in a community who are above the meaner aspects of community factionalism. If these people are well regarded by the factions with which they are affiliated and if they can work together in a council, an important step has been taken toward integrating the community. In one community group an important minority, which for generations had remained aloof from the school and community, received almost its first recognition when members proportional to their numbers were invited to serve on the departmental council. This first step has led to many other steps toward full integration of the group into the life of the school and community. Thus far no case has been reported in which community rivalries have broken out in an advisory council or interfered seriously with a council's work.

### **Spreading the Program Too Thinly**

Because councils are typically interested in the agricultural education of all of the people in the community and are especially conscious of the needs for education of some of their fellow adults, they may envision a program broader than can be accomplished with the staff and facilities at hand. Sometimes they become more interested in a "big" program than in a good program. They should be constantly warned to undertake only what can be done well.

### Overemphasis of Adult Work

Councils have been most effective in extending work with adults. Because their contacts are largely with adults and because there are many adults in every community, the teacher may be drawn away from his high school program in an effort to serve the adults. Probably no teacher has actually been very much out of balance in this respect, since such teachers have traditionally given most or all of their time to boys, but some people in some communities have objected to extensive work with adults and have claimed neglect of the high school boys. The wise teacher will maintain an interest in all phases of a well-balanced program of agricultural education and will work to keep the interests of his council members balanced.

## CHAPTER VII

### COUNCILS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN RELATION TO GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES

SOME PEOPLE believe that the use of councils in agricultural education is one more evidence of the tendency of persons in vocational education to separate themselves from the public school system and to set up special arrangements for administering their work. They have become alert to these tendencies because they recall that for many years there was a Federal Board for Vocational Education separate from the U.S. Office of Education, because there are separate boards for vocational education in every state, and because one state (Wisconsin) provides for separate local boards for vocational education.

#### Councils as a Means of Averting a Dual System of Public Education

Actually, advisory councils are a means of preventing the establishment of separate administrative machinery for vocational education. Those who argue for separate local boards can fairly point out that vocational education is in many respects different from the traditional programs of the schools, and that it is sometimes badly treated or largely neglected by school boards and school administrators. The remedy is not, however, to resort to a dual system of public education. The special and sympathetic treatment vocational education requires can be secured to a considerable extent through the use of advisory councils of laymen deeply interested in the field. These councils must, of course, be definitely a part of the existing administration of the school.

Unless the schools set up adequate programs of vocational education, including comprehensive programs of vocational education for adults, they can expect that facilities for this purpose, publicly financed and managed, will be set up outside the schools. It seems wiser to make some special arrangements for vocational education within our schools than to risk the further development of separate and rival public educational agencies.

We have already ample evidence in agricultural education as to how separate programs develop. During the first third of this century, most of our public schools refused to participate in agricultural education. As a result, the farmers turned elsewhere for help and programs separate from the schools developed under the extension services of our agricultural colleges. It was recognized that educational programs for farmers would have to be carried out under the auspices of local

farmers and so local organizations of farmers were set up as sponsoring agencies. In Illinois, the local organization is the County Farm Bureau. Fortunately, the farm bureaus in Illinois have also been interested in the teaching of vocational agriculture in the schools. Instead of "hogging" the field, as some separate agencies may wish to do and as the farm bureaus in some states have done, the county farm bureaus in Illinois have been willing to share their responsibilities with the schools. It is clear that a school program is no more likely to thrive without farmer support than an extension program would have. If the schools wish to get the support of farmers, they must establish an arrangement suited to school conditions whereby farmers may express themselves about school policies and, in an organized way, support the work of the schools. The advisory council seems to be the most effective means, adapted to school use, which has yet been discovered for accomplishing these purposes.

### Use of Advisory Councils May Be School-wide

There seems to be no reason why the use of advisory councils should be confined to the vocational fields. If they are necessary in providing a vital and functional program of vocational education, they may also be necessary in providing programs in health education, social education, and education for leisure-time activities which are vital and functional. Programs in these areas are often anemic and nonfunctional because they lack community support and because they are not planned realistically to meet community needs.

If our schools become increasingly democratic, we can expect that more use will be made of advisory councils. In a democracy decisions are made by the people affected by them. All of the people of a community are affected by decisions regarding school policies. Schemes for democratizing the schools which provide for increased participation in policy-making by pupils and teachers go only a part of the way toward democracy in education. It is true that the people of a community have a chance to express themselves through their boards of education, but this is an entirely inadequate arrangement, and the effect of public opinion on the schools is often very slight when this is the only provision made.

In using a system of advisory councils in the schools, contact would be made with a considerable number of representative individuals, including persons with and without children in school. Such a step should not be taken unless the school honestly desires to become a *public* school serving the entire public without discrimination. Councils truly representative of the community can be expected to demand

types of education which the schools do not offer and service to many groups, principally adult, whom many schools now make no attempt to reach. A basic revolution in school practices could be anticipated if councils were used for all parts of a school system with as much effect as they have been used in some schools in agricultural education.

The schools have not been entirely successful in avoiding the influence of laymen even when this seems to have been their purpose. Pressure groups frequently arise, sometimes with proposals that are not sound or helpful because their contacts with the schools are too limited to enable them to make good recommendations. The way to prevent the evolution of destructive pressure groups and "school fights" which involve the whole community appears to be the development of councils which include a large and representative group of laymen with whom school officials and teachers consult continuously and systematically. In no other way can we expect the community generally to be well enough informed to be able to express itself helpfully about school matters.

### **Our Public Schools Need to Regain Their Contacts With the Public**

We are hearing much these days about the sad plight of the schools and their teachers. Something approaching a breakdown of public education is occurring in some parts of the country. Public understanding and support is needed in order to remedy these conditions. Perhaps the situation is largely due to the neglect of the public by the schools. It is well to remember that public acceptance of the schools which led to their development in this country to a status far higher than public schools have attained in any other country grew out of close contacts between the public and its schools and a feeling on the part of the public that the schools were really *their* schools.

The policies governing our rural schools in the days of the pioneers were largely developed in annual "school meetings" which were attended by a high percentage of the voters. Discussions of the "town-meeting" type preceded the adoption of these policies. Between "school meetings" the boards of education managed the schools very directly, supervising the teachers, providing facilities, and testing the accomplishments of the pupils. Many school buildings were literally built by the people of their districts. School districts were small and it was easy for an individual in the district to find out what was going on at the school and to make his opinions effective in school management. There have been several developments which have weaned the public away from the schools: (1) the rise of large school systems and large school

districts with central administrations far removed from the people; (2) the development of professionally trained school administrators, many of whom have come to believe that a school should be managed by the top executive and who tend to think of the schools as "their schools"; (3) the evolution of a teaching profession with conceptions of "academic freedom," a disposition to discredit the layman's knowledge of education, and resentment against lay interference; (4) the accumulation of scientific knowledge about certain phases of teaching, which laymen do not always share, and which teachers feel obligated to respect, whatever the opinions of laymen.

In at least one large city school system parents have been barred from visiting the schools their children attend. Teachers have largely lost their contacts with laymen and find it difficult to talk with them about school matters; often they are urged or ordered not to talk with the patrons about school affairs. Laymen, who find it easy to disregard the schools, find another reason for neglecting them in the apparent desire of school people to keep them out of the schools and away from school affairs.

The most glaring result of this situation has been the antagonism or indifference of the public toward the raising of adequate funds for school support. Since about 60 per cent of the voters have no children in schools and receive no direct benefit from them except in schools offering programs of adult education, and since the 40 per cent with children in school have often been led to believe that they have no part in school affairs, it is not surprising that the voters are often reluctant to spend money for school purposes.

One of the fundamental reasons for the lack of coordination of school and community is a common feeling on the part of laymen and teachers that education is accomplished in schools. Of course, education goes on continuously, in and out of school. Laymen, as well as teachers, are educators and some of them, particularly some parents and some employers, are excellent teachers. If we could recognize that education is a function in which all share and that most of the functional education anyone receives he gets out of school, teachers and laymen could join in their common task and each could contribute to the work of the other.

The American public schools can retain considerable prestige and public support for a time, though probably not enough to make the advances they should be making, because of the momentum they gained during the period when they worked closely with the public. They can not expect to retain public favor indefinitely unless they find modern means of working with the public which will take the place of the methods which contributed so much in the pioneering days of public

education in this country. We do not want to go back to small districts with their many boards of education. We want teachers kept free to teach what they know to be true, using the best methods available to them. We want school administrators who have not abdicated their proper functions to laymen. Advisory councils provide the best arrangement for getting what we want and avoiding what we do not want from our lay constituents.

Some re-education of laymen will be necessary if they are to serve well as council members. They must recognize that their relationship to teachers is something like the relationship of an individual to his physician. Laymen are free to employ the physicians of their choice, but they are not free to dictate the methods physicians will use. Some laymen will have to give up their belief that they may properly employ teachers to confirm children in their own ignorances and prejudices.

### Why Councils Have Often Developed First in Agricultural Education

It is not surprising that the use of councils has been more common in agricultural education than in most other school fields. Several factors in agricultural education have predisposed toward their use:

(1) Results from agricultural education appear in the community if they appear at all. The public is able to judge these outcomes and to express fair and capable opinions about the way the agricultural department of the school is managed.

(2) Farmers, perhaps more than other people, are inclined toward democratic practices. It is hard to get their support for any venture which they or their representatives do not share in planning.

(3) There has been recognition in agricultural education that school and community join in the work to be done. "Supervised practice" in farming, one of the most important parts of agricultural education, takes place on farms and under the joint direction of teachers and parents. Teachers of agriculture learned early that results can not be secured with children without the support of parents and other adults.

(4) Teachers of agriculture work with adults; until they began to confer with representative adults in councils, few farmers attended their classes; once councils were used, there was an immediate response and attendance at adult classes in agriculture has grown by leaps and bounds.

All these factors would come into play in any other school subject or activity if teachers were expected to get results with adults and children which are evident outside the school.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

ADVISORY COUNCILS have been in use in agricultural education almost as long as agriculture has been taught in our secondary schools. Their use has, however, been sporadic, and often the functions of these councils have been much more limited than they might well have been. Surprisingly little study has been made of the use of advisory councils. Little has been taught about them to teachers and prospective teachers of agriculture. There is a body of tested information on the subject, however, which is summarized in this publication. Some of the points which stand out are the following:

(1) Many and varied uses of advisory councils have been discovered. Many types of councils have proved their worth.

(2) A general council for the agricultural department is needed and should be established first. Other councils or committees may grow out of, and supplement, the departmental council.

(3) Advisory councils are almost essential to successful work with adult farmers. They are very valuable in F.F.A. work and in providing supervised practice for high school boys. They are useful in planning the class work in high school agriculture.

(4) Councils can be managed so that they do not interfere with the board of education or the central administration of a school. No serious difficulties have arisen in the use of councils except that they are often less used than they might be and, because of disuse, they sometimes become unimportant and are discontinued.

(5) It is possible to get very good persons to serve on councils and to give considerable amounts of time without remuneration even for the expenses involved.

(6) Although councils have often been considered valuable only for new teachers or for teachers new to their communities, they are very helpful to any teacher or department at any time. They may be especially useful to a teacher who has long served in one position and who has tended to "get into a rut."

(7) A council should be a definitely organized group with its own officers and committees, with regularly scheduled meetings, an annual program of work, and recorded minutes. While the teacher and the school administrator can do much to facilitate the work of a council, they must avoid being the central figures at council meetings.

(8) New uses of councils are continually being discovered. There should be further investigation of their possibilities in connection with

the F.F.A. and other phases of the high school program, in evaluating the work of an agriculture department, and in coordinating the activities of other agencies with those of the school.

(9) Teachers of agriculture and school administrators should be taught how to use councils. They should have an opportunity to observe councils in action. Practice teaching for prospective teachers of agriculture should, if possible, be provided in communities in which it is possible for student teachers to work with councils.

There can be no denial that the work that councils do is very important in agricultural education. We can expect that better ways of getting this work done by councils will be found. It may be that we shall sometime cease to use councils. Our emphasis should always be on the functions to be performed, and no machinery for performing these functions should be perpetuated after it has ceased to be the best means of doing a job. The current functions of advisory councils have been described in Chapter IV. Such a list of functions, or a list which has been revised and improved, can guide us in determining whether or not we need advisory councils and in planning their organization and use.

## Appendix

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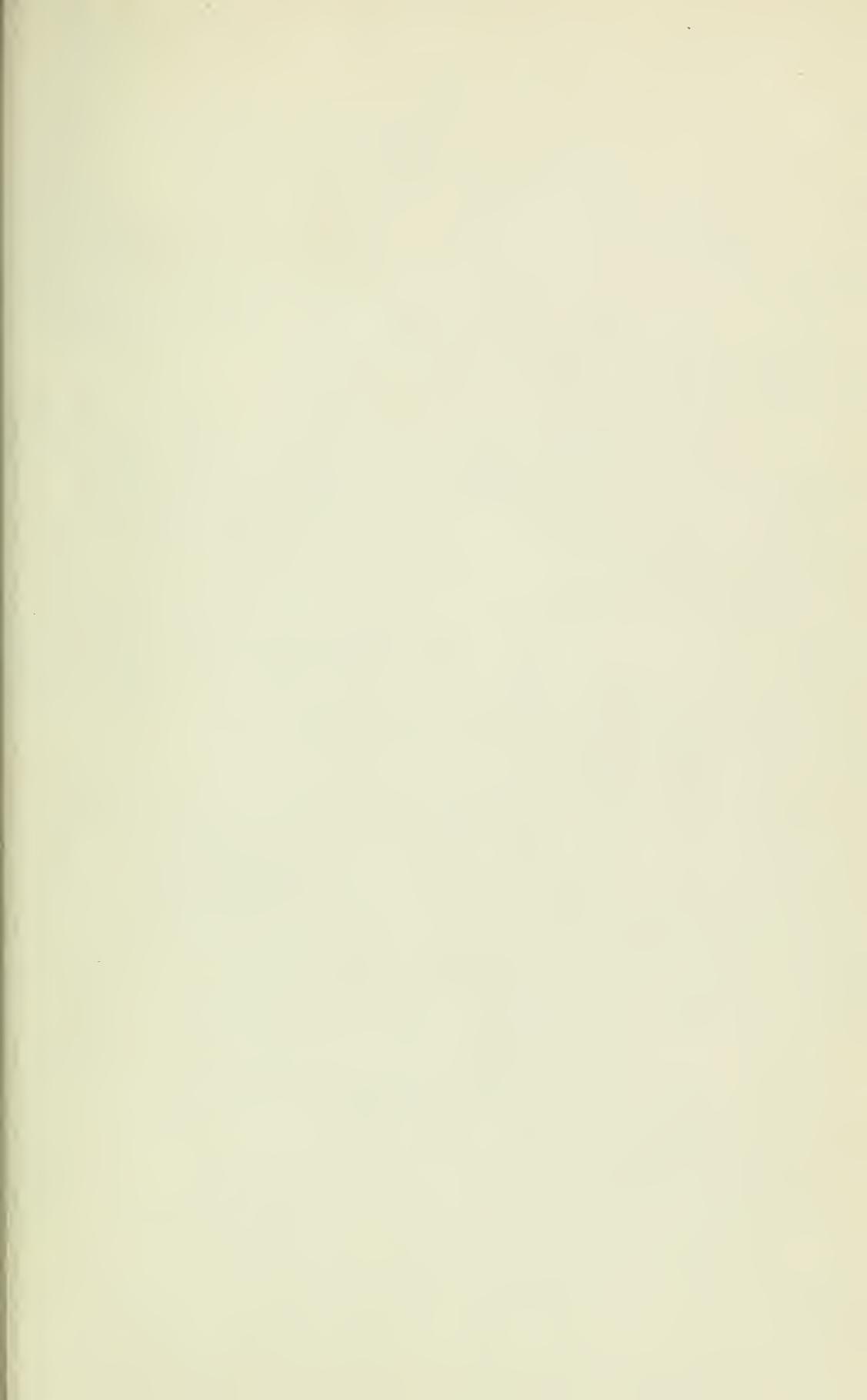
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